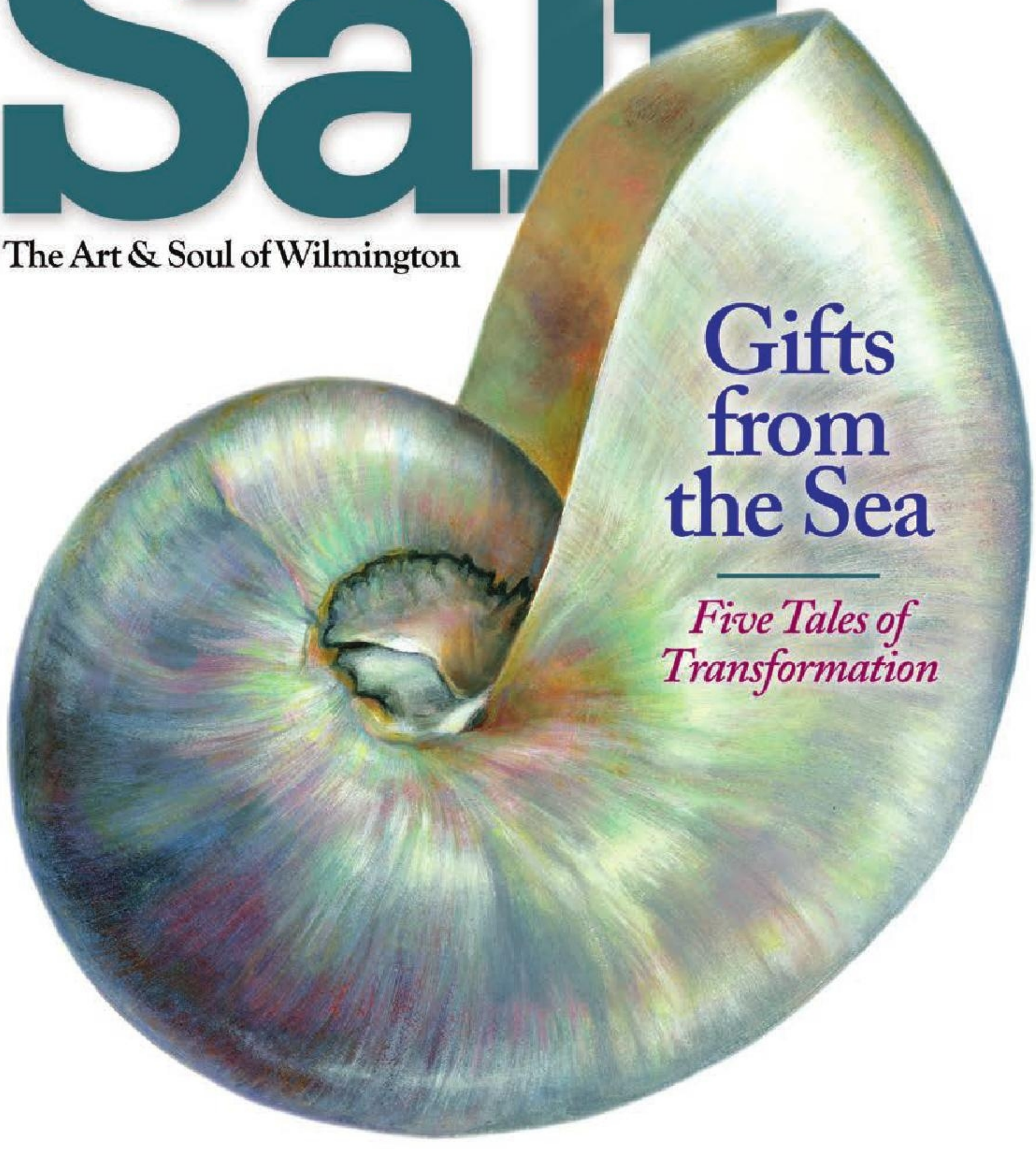
January 2015

Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington



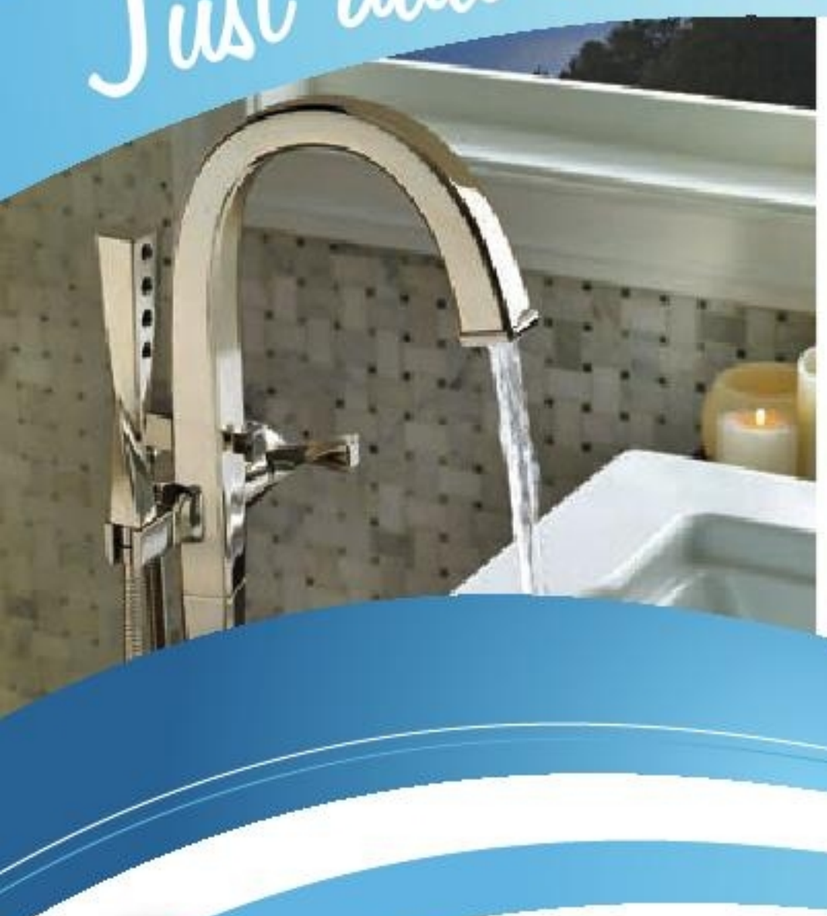
Gifts from the Sea

Five Tales of Transformation

A Cottage Reborn • The Education of Evan Folds • Glory of Old Christmas

Just add water...

BRIZO



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1818 Vincennes Place · Pembroke at Landfall

The open floor plan features a vaulted ceiling, 1st floor master with additional 1st floor den that could be used used as a 4th bedroom. A lovely front courtyard and raised terrace provide tranquil space to enjoy this charming setting. **$499,000**

1709 Fontenay Place · Pembroke at Landfall

This 3 bedroom, 3½ bath townhouse style condominium is ready to move right in! This unit features a large living/dining area with vaulted ceiling and access to 2 private pond patios. **$599,000**

726 Forest Hills Drive · Forest Hills

This fine painted brick home with slate roof and slate terrace is beautifully landscaped with a meandering creek in the backyard. 4 bedrooms and 3½ baths, formal living and dining rooms plus a stunning sunroom make this residence home. **$679,000**

437 Moss Tree Drive · Landfall

Enjoy new construction by Logan Homes overlooking Landfall's Nicklaus golf course (Pines #2) and 2 conservation areas. This low country design features a rocking chair front porch and large screened porch and patio. **$739,900**

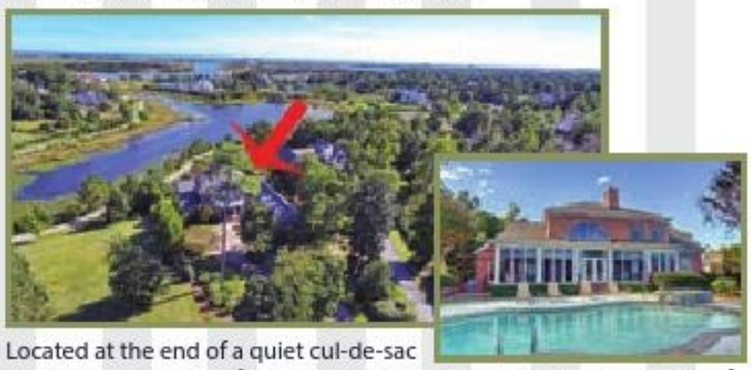
346 Causeway Drive · The Mooring Condo

Waterfront at Wrightsville Beach that include a 55' boat slip! This 3 bedroom condominium has been wonderfully updated and features an open floor plan. **$799,000**

12 B Mallard Street · Colony Club

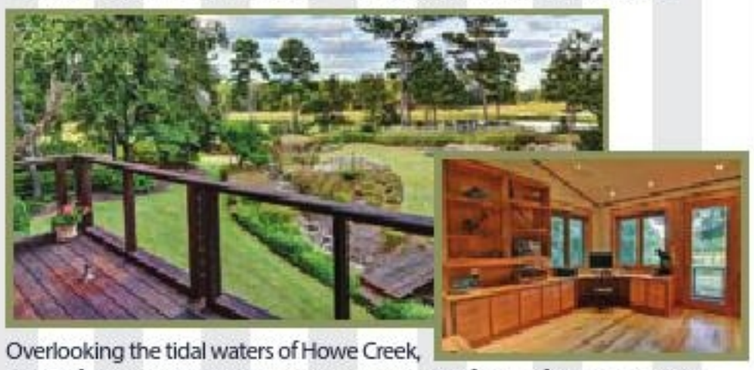
Wrightsville Beach Oceanfront! 3 bedroom, 3 bath townhome features granite kitchen, tile and hardwood floors throughout with stunning views from both levels. **$939,000**

2220 Moreland Drive · Landfall



Located at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac overlooking scenic Landfall Lake and the mile-long walking trail with views of the ICW and Wrightsville Beach. The open floor plan and 10 ft ceilings provide a spacious feel and views of the fenced yard and pool from nearly every room.

2033 Balmoral Place · Highlands in Landfall



Overlooking the tidal waters of Howe Creek, this Craftsman style residence captures a spa-like feeling, from the giant koi pond that greets you to teh secluded 1 acre manicured grounds with 215 ft of water frontage. **$1,295,000**

1 Oyster Catcher Road · Figure 8 Island

"Twin Views" - glorious sunrises and spectacular sunsets abound from this unique listing! Extensive wrap around decks provide the perfect place to enjoy incredible ocean, sound and inlet views! **$1,595,000**

32 West Henderson Street · Wrightsville Beach

Life doesn't get much better than calling 32 West Henderson Street home! Huge covered porches with heart pine flooring provide the perfect place to entertain or to catch a nap overlooking Banks Channel. A private pier offers a large gazebo and floating dock. **$1,995,000**

2001 Balmoral Place · Highlands in Landfall

Set amidst the manicured 2.28 acre lot overlooking the headwaters of Howe Creek, this Michael Kersting designed masterpiece captures the serenity of life on the tidal marsh. Expansive views from this double lot bring the gardens into play no matter what the reason. **$3,375,000**

7527 Masonboro Sound Road · Masonboro

Over a century ago, a magnificent Beaux Arts mansion was designed by Henry Bacon and nestled under a canopy of stately live oaks, draped in moss, on one of Wilmington's prominent bluffs. Sited on nearly 8 acres with 300 ft of prime waterfront overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway and Masonboro Island. **$5,750,000**

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School Name	Focus	Grades	Enrollment	Students: Faculty	Admission Requirements	Tuition
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Friends School of Wilmington 207 Pine Grove Drive Wilmington, NC 28403 (910) 791-8221 www.fsow.org	Montessori preschool and inquiry-based elementary/middle school. Small classes, vigorous academics, integrated technology. Enrichment program includes art, music, foreign language and athletics.	18 months -8th grade	180	8:1	Varies per grade but includes: application, drawing/writing sample or student questionnaire, teacher recommendation form, transcripts, classroom visit and developmental assessment.	$5,765- $11,025
Peace Rose Montessori School 2173 Wrightsville Avenue Wilmington, NC 28403 (910) 315-0780 www.peacerose.org	Emphasis on independence, self-guided learning and a strong social and academic environment. Yoga, music, art, spanish and farm studies are explored outside of traditional academics.	PreK-5th	50	1:10	Tour and observation. After assessing social and academic skills, parents and director meet to see how Montessori meets child and family needs.	$7,250- $7,650
St. Mark Catholic School 1013 Eastwood Road Wilmington, NC 28403 (910) 452-2800 www.stmarkcatholicschool.org	St. Mark is a Catholic school which strives to be the benchmark of academic excellence through superior teaching of a rigorous curriculum.	PreK-8th	500	12:1 (PreK-4)	Admission is open to all qualified students based on academic record, admissions test, and classroom visit.	$5,365- $7,070
St. Mary Catholic School 217 South 4th Street Wilmington, NC 28401 (910) 762-5491 www.thestmaryschool.org	Catholic Christian school emphasizing critical thinking skills, reasoning and the Christian call to service. Offers exceptional fine arts program, sports, enhanced technology, extra-curricular activities and weekly Mass celebration.	PreK-8th	235	10:1	Submission of current and prior report cards and EOG test results, birth certificate, prospective student form and evaluation form completed by former Principal.	$2,745 (PreK) $5,210-$6,410 (K-8th)
Wilmington Christian Academy 1401 North College Road Wilmington, NC 28405 (910) 791-4248 www.wilmingtonchristian.com	Wilmington Christian Academy prepares students for future success by providing a comprehensive education offering Christian faith instruction, excellent academics, athletics, fine arts and community service.	Preschool -12th	802	17:1	Basic requirements include an application, an on-campus interview, student records and placement testing for K5-12.	$152 weekly (PreK3 & 4) $5,110 (K5-5) $5,330 (6-12)
Windermere Presbyterian Preschool 104 Windemere Road Wilmington, NC 28405 (910) 791-8290 www.windermerepreschool.com	Half day Christian preschool focused on social, emotional, physical, and academic development of preschoolers. Offers a loving environment that allows children to learn through play and teacher-directed activities.	Toddler -PreK	51	varies depending on age of classroom	Admission is open to all students. Child must be of required age by August 31 of the current school year. Call the director to set up a tour.	$150- $205 (per month) (+ registration)

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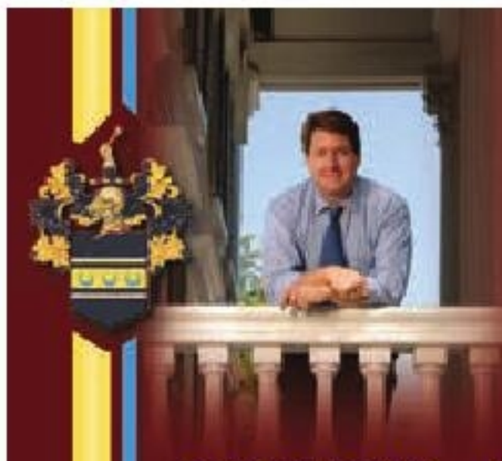

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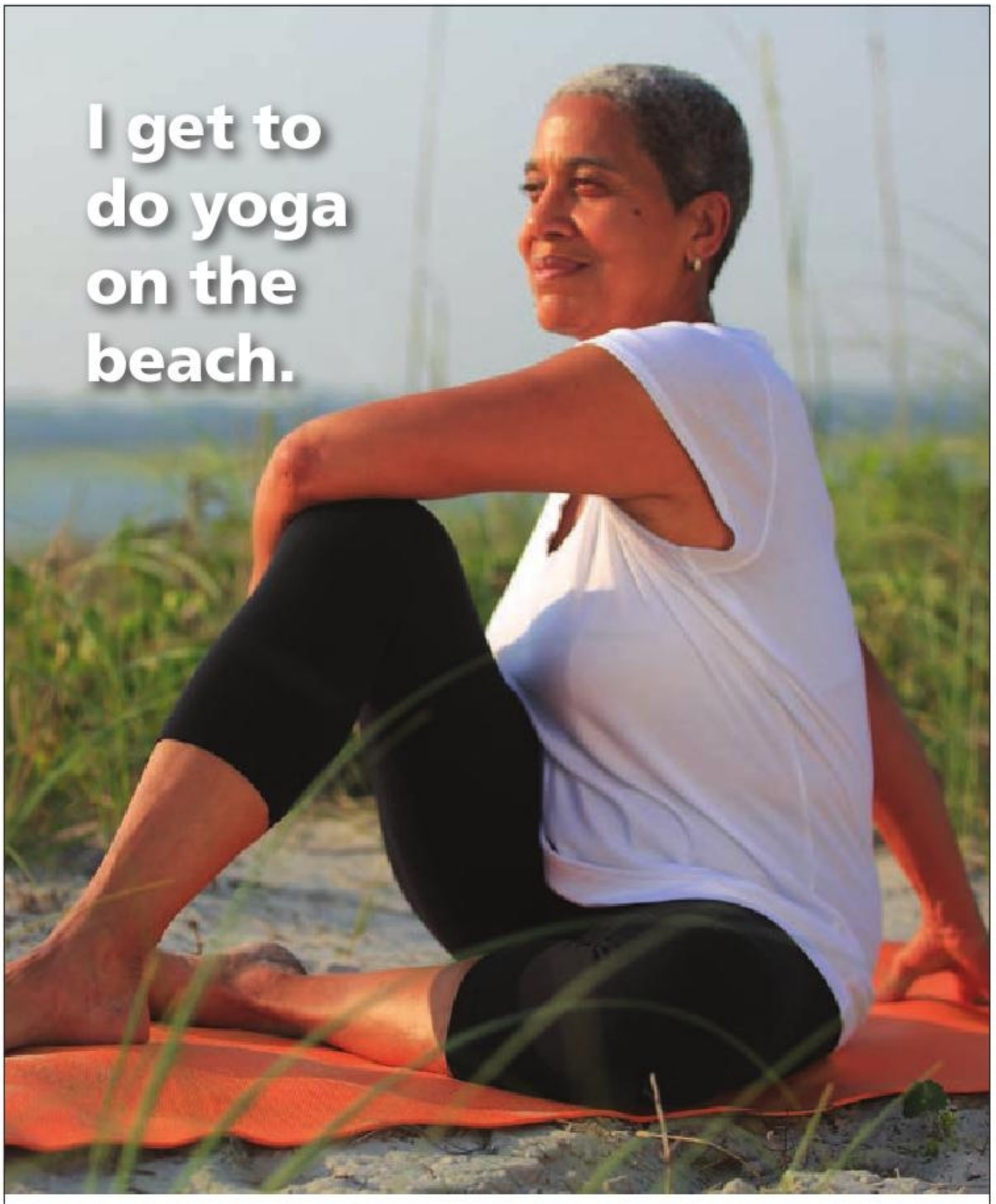

Joanne's knees were worn out: years of sports had taken their toll. The pain, obvious to all who knew her, was something she tried to ignore. Then, she had both knees replaced at New Hanover Regional Medical Center Orthopedic Hospital. Now, she's able to walk and do yoga – pain free. **www.nhrmc.org**

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VOLUME 3, NO. 1

4022 Market Street, Suite 202
Wilmington, NC 28403
910.833.7159

Jim Dodson, Editor
jim@saltmagazinenc.com

Andie Stuart Rose, Creative Director
andie@saltmagazinenc.com

Ashley Wahl, Senior Editor
910.833.7159 · ashley@saltmagazinenc.com

Kira Schoenfelder, Graphic Designer

Lauren Shumaker, Graphic Designer

CONTRIBUTORS

Harry Blair, Susan Campbell, Wiley Cash, Jennifer Chapis, Clyde Edgerton, Jason Frye, Nan Graham, Susan Hance, Virginia Holman, Mark Holmberg, Ann Ipock, Sara King, Meridith Martens, Lydia McGhee, Mary Novitsky, Sandra Redding, Gwenyfar Rohler, Dana Sachs, Noah Salt, Stephen E. Smith, Astrid Stellanova, Barbara J. Sullivan, Mary Syrett, Bill Thompson

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Rick Ricozzi, Bill Ritenour, Mark Steelman, James Stefiuk

David Woronoff, Publisher

ADVERTISING SALES

Marty Hefner, Sales Director
336.707.6893 · marty@saltmagazinenc.com

Sybil Stokes
910.616.1420 · sybil@saltmagazinenc.com

Tessa Young
518.207.5571 · tessa@saltmagazinenc.com

Lauren Manship, Advertising Graphics
910.833.7158 · lmanship@saltmagazinenc.com

CIRCULATION

Darlene Stark, Circulation/Distribution Director
910.693.2488

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Stephanie S., *11th grade*

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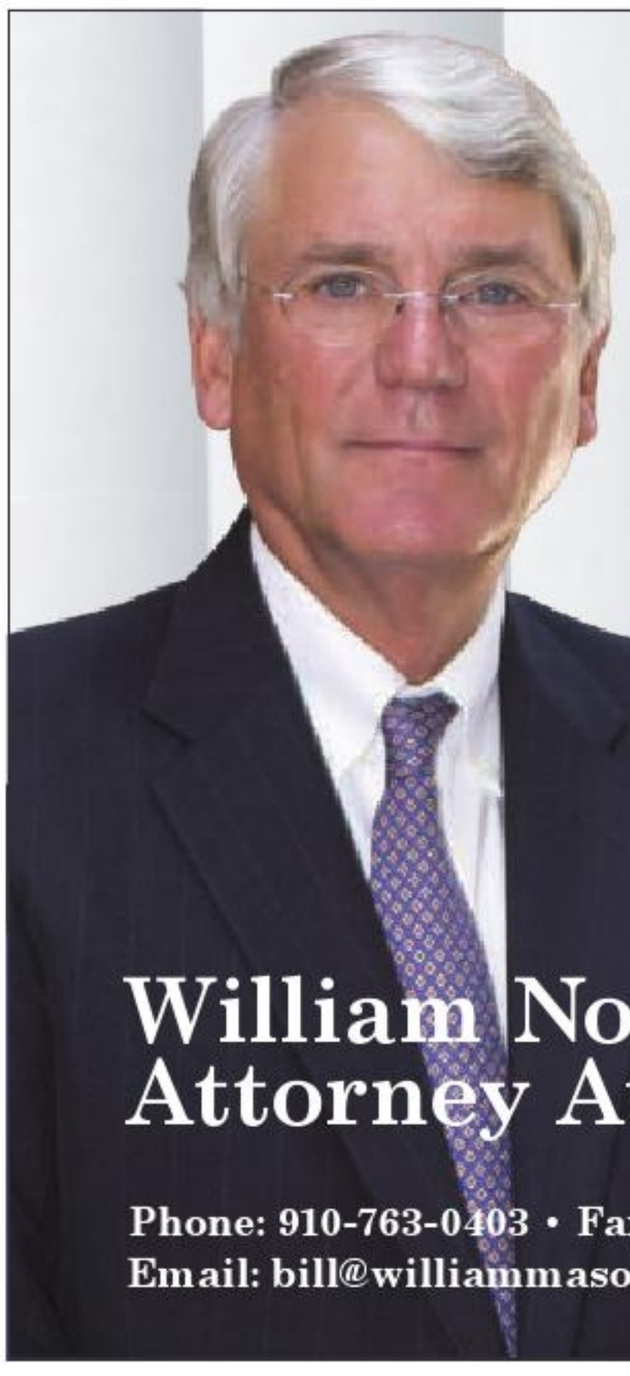

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The Wee Small Hours

By Jim Dodson

For better or worse, I fancy early morning darkness and do some of my best work in it, especially at this time of the year, an affection for midwinter cold and darkness I share with the likes of professional snowplow operators, warmly dressed burglars and New York cabbies.

Even if I were constitutionally capable of sleeping past 4 a.m., which I am not, regardless of whatever time zone I happen to be in at that moment, I would find the still, quiet and not unimportantly dark hours before dawn the most valuable and productive hours of my day, the time when I can think, read, write and sort through any problems I took to bed with a remarkable clarity. For what it's worth, it's also the time I light a candle and say thanks to whatever kind force of the universe put me here, allowing me to see things a little clearer in the darkness. No less than Jesus himself advised one to slip into a darkened place when you pray. Because winter is my prime writing season, I joke that eleven books have been written in the dark. Except, I'm not really joking.

Sometimes I think this affection for the wee small hours, as my father used to call them, is merely the influence of having a father who was an inveterate early riser and the fact that I, like him, cut my professional teeth on an afternoon newspaper that required me to report for duty before the Eastern horizon turned pink. From an early age I began writing my stories before most civilized folk even thought of getting out of bed, and it's been that way ever since.

Who can say for sure why the hours of our busy lives are silently ruled by such unassailable circadian rhythms? The answer to this puzzle seems as elusive and beautifully tantalizing as the clear and serenely shining stars and moon that span the pre-dawn firmament on any given clear cold January morning, making a body and soul shiver and feel deliciously puny in the starshine of a newly birthing day.

Though she never came out and said as much during the many years we lived on a forested hill near the coast of Maine, I always had the feeling my sleepy ladywife found it amusing the way I would suddenly pop awake and slip out of bed with such urgency to put on the coffee and my funky red plaid wool Elmer Fudd coat, shoulder a hundred pound bag of sorghum and wade through the waist-deep January snow to a designated feeding spot at the back of our property where we — well, I — fed a family of white-tail deer and a lonely bachelor moose through the forbidding nights of Yankee winter. Something about this modest and solitary act of caretaking creatures who shared our forested keep in the arctic starlight deeply pleased me in ways I still can't fully explain. It was enough to sometimes see their silhouettes waiting patiently in the moonlight at the edge of the forest, a thousand cloven hoof marks in the trampled snow where they assembled to feed on such nights, a circle of life etched in ice.

Back home here in Carolina, where the winters are far gentler and our own circle of life is being drawn ever closer, my Yankee wife is much happier with dark midwinter nights and still amused by my occasional pining for those dark pre-dawn rituals. Not long ago we watched a documentary about life in a quaint Scandinavian village up near the Arctic Circle that has resisted most of the conveniences and problems of modern urban life. It was a beautiful blue place by the sea, like something from a fairy tale, a village framed by snow-peaked mountains and dense evergreen forests. Reindeer sometimes wander the village streets.

"I could absolutely live there," I heard myself mutter as we watched.

She patted my hand. "I know. But I'd miss you."

Here in the Northern Hemisphere, meteorological scientists call the three-month period from November 5 to February 5 "solar winter" because these are the coldest and darkest days of the year. Early January is the statistical darkest and coldest time of the year.

For many folks this poses a serious psychological burden. Shorter days and absence of sunlight do a number on their embattled psyches, a very real ailment caused by deprivation of the sun called seasonal affective disorder, a syndrome that can cause depression, acute fatigue and decreased libido, affecting women more than men.

My wife feels their pain, probably because she's a true child of midsummer, a July baby who craves heat and sunlight, one reason I suppose she says she'd miss me if I ventured off to live in a blue Norwegian village by the sea. Her idea of the perfect day is a sunny summer afternoon here in Old Catawba, a place where winter snow is mostly for show and rarely worth breaking out the Elmer Fudd coat for.

I, on the other hand, am a proud son of early February, a scion of midwinter who loves the kind of cold and darkness that makes a crackling wood fire or burning candle seem like an invitation to one's ancestors or personal muse (or even a lonely bachelor moose) to come close for a story or meal in the moonlight.

Somehow this dichotomy seems to nicely balance in our marriage, classic seasonal yin and yang, drawing us even closer if only because I keep my summer girl's feet warm in winter and she seems to take genuine pleasure in seeing how this time of year delights and enriches my life.

Besides, I simply fancy a different kind of light — Christmas lights, a good reading lamp, flickering votives in an ancient cathedral, or simply the wash of a full moon casting milky shadows on the lawn. During our years in Maine, in strict violation of town burning ordinances, we always had a roaring midnight New Year bonfire in our side yard, a tribute to some ancient instinct to press back the winter darkness, I suppose — inviting friends to toss items they were eager to be free of (broken toys, old love letters, more than one first bad novel) onto the flames, sending up a swirling of glowing sparks of fire to a frozen heaven. Once we even got a brief glimpse of the fabled Northern lights on such a deep winter's night, as eerie and beautiful as a light in the darkness can get.

In her thought-provoking recent book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, veteran preacher Barbara Brown Taylor points out how darkness gets a bum rap from ancient Scripture and modern culture.

Holy Scripture paints darkness as metaphorical evil, she notes, while light is seen a symbol of goodness and salvation. To "see the light" is to be saved, whereas to be "lost in the dark" is to be confused or doomed. The fever is always worse at night — and so are the bogeymen inside our over stimulated imaginations.

Some of us grew up in America where it was safe to stay out playing after dark, chasing fireflies or kicking the can — but, alas, no more. Owing to 24-hour cable news and the evening newscast — little more than police blotters of

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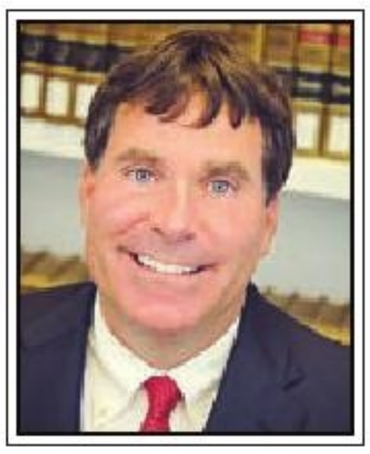

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the air — we collectively fear the unknown terrors that lurk out yonder in the darkness, murderous thieves who would steal anything from your precious children to your flat-screen TV. In one way or another, we're all afraid to peek beneath the bed.

But Barbara Taylor argues persuasively that darkness is not only essential to our physical and spiritual well-being — the place where our weary bones may rest up and heal while our minds make sense of the day's events — but important time off from the world's clock when genuine insights and solutions are free to come unbidden in dreams or waking revelation. Jesus ascended from a dark tomb, she points out, wild herds almost always give birth before the wee small hours, and "dark nights of the soul" often lead to life-changing breakthroughs and personal epiphanies.

"Darkness,' she writes, "turns out to be as essential to our physical well-being as light. We not only need plenty of darkness to sleep well; we also need it to be well. The circadian rhythm of waking and sleeping matches the natural cycle of day and night, which effects everything from our body rhythms to our relationships."

Over the years I've trained myself — almost — to ignore the common wraiths of worry and that whisper like Shakespeare's Iago in one's inner ear long before dawn: *Do I have enough saved for retirement? So what's really enough? Why the hell do I sound like some dude on those insipid investment commercials designed to make us all feel guilty? And what about that funny noise coming from beneath the car . . .*

The cure for me is to slide out of the sack and leave my bride to her own cozy winter dreams, put on the coffee, let old Rufus the cat in from his nighttime travels, light a candle and happily receive whatever unexpected gifts my journey through the winter night has provided. More than once it's been a great first line of a book or an answer to a problem that last night seemed just out of reach.

As summer's lease expired early one morning last fall, I was sitting on my wooden garden bench enjoying the sight of a spectacular lunar eclipse when the back door opened and my summer girl stepped outside bundled in her downy hotel robe, bearing cups of coffee to also take in the rare celestial show.

A few minutes later we impulsively hopped in the car — Ma in her robe, Pa in his ratty slippers — and gave chase to the vanishing moon all the way to the edge of the Uwharrie hills, returning home in the brilliant golden light of a glorious sunrise.

"That was so wonderful," she said, taking my hand. "Maybe I should always get up in the darkness."

Then she thought about it and laughed.

"On second thought, that's your thing — not mine."

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.

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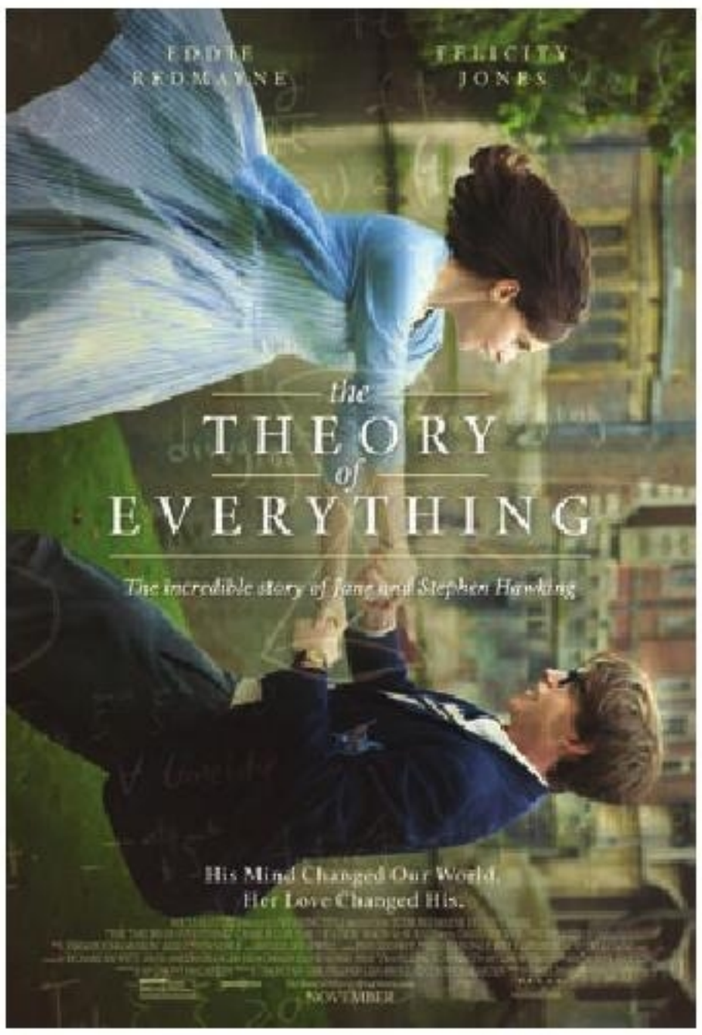
SaltWorks

Let's Get Astrophysical

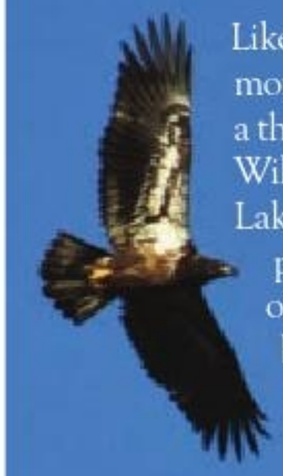


Monday, January 5, through Wednesday, January 7, 7 p.m., Cinematique of Wilmington presents *The Theory of Everything* (PG-13, 2 hr., 3 min.), the extraordinary story of one of the world's greatest living minds, astrophysicist Stephen Hawking, and his astronomic love affair with ex-wife Jane Wilde. Hawking (Eddie Redmayne) meets Cambridge beauty Jane Wilde (Felicity Jones) in college and they quickly become inseparable. At age 21, Hawking receives an earth shattering diagnosis, rendering him physically inept for most of his life. Together, Hawking and Wilde are able to surmount impossible odds, break medical and scientific ground, and create one of the century's greatest love stories. Don't miss the film critics are calling a "sure thing" for Oscar nominations. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Ticket: $7. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Easy Does It

Last month, Cape Fear Museum opened *Make It Work*, a simple machines exhibit that invites you to climb aboard and discover how simple machines make maritime work easier. Experiment with boat hull designs and pulley systems; aim a heavy naval cannon with the help of a powerful lifting device; and hoist a loaded wooden barrel with ease (aka a handcart). While you're there, view maritime-related photographs from the Lower Cape Fear, discover historic objects from the Museum's collection related to Wilmington's boat and ship building history, and go on a simple machines scavenger hunt throughout the museum. On display through September 13, 2015. Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1–5 p.m. Admission: $8 (adults); $7 (seniors, students and military); $5 (youth). Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4382 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Feeling Adventuresome?



Like some of us here at *Salt*, perhaps you resolved to be more adventurous this year. If so, here's something for you: a three-day Outer Banks birding excursion organized by Wilmington's Halyburton Park. January 23 – 25, tour Pocosin Lakes, Lake Mattamuskeet (see Virginia Holman's column on page 38 for the scoop on our state's largest natural lake, one of the most important overwintering spots for migratory birds on the Atlantic Flyway), Alligator River, Pea Island, Oregon Inlet, Bodie Island, Hatteras and Ocracoke Island. Before heading back to Wilmington, the two-and-a-half-hour Ocracoke-Cedar Island Ferry ride will provide one last opportunity to watch the birds. Cost: $135 (includes transportation and entrance fees). Lodging (double room at Comfort Inn in Nags Head and Pony Island Motel in Ocracoke) and meals are coordinated but not included in the cost of the trip. Register by Tuesday, January 13. Info: halyburtonpark.com or (910) 341-0075.

Match Made in Heaven

The annual Wilmington Wine and Chocolate Festival returns for three sweet days of you-know-what plus a little something extra: "A Pinch of Basile" (comedy act) and Thyme (aka Catering Thyme). On Friday, January 30, 7–10 p.m., regional vintners, chocolatiers and specialty food purveyors present products for sale at The Grand Tasting, a catered event with live music by The Schoolboys (UNCW's unofficial faculty rock band) and a Comedy, Beer and Cigar Bar featuring Chapel Hill's Carolina Brewery, Atomic Cigars and internationally renowned Greek comedian Basile (you know him as the voice of Bullwinkle J. Moose and, perhaps, from the James Brown/O.J. Simpson Trial Updates). Saturday, January 31, 11 a.m. until 6 p.m., and Sunday, February 1, noon until 4 p.m., sample delectable goodies while exploring a European-inspired Marketplace featuring live music, demos by the executive chefs of Basile Foods and Catering Thyme, lunch on the river, and gift wrap and basket designers. Bring a date. You will have them at "chocolate." Proceeds benefit the Volunteer Older Citizens Action League (VOCAL), a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving seniors and supporting senior services. Tickets: $45 (Grand Tasting); $10–15 (Marketplace); free for children age 5 and under. Coastline Event Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: wilmington-wineandchocolatefestival.com.

On the Fringe

To put it simply, the 2015 Wilmington Fringe Festival at City Stage is something you'll want on your calendar. Three original full-length plays and ten one-acts run January 8–11, 16–18, 23–25. Expect unconventional. Expect local talent. Expect the unexpected. See website for complete schedule and ticket prices. City Stage, 21 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 342-0272 or www.citystageco.com.

THE 2015 CITY STAGE CO. WILMINGTON FRINGE FESTIVAL

Wax Poetic

The Wilmington Art Association presents a three-day workshop with artist Liz Hosier on Wednesday, January 7, through Friday, January 9, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. "Exploring Painting with Oil & Cold Wax" encourages student artists to explore abstract painting with oil and cold wax as well as a variety of other media. Experiment with ways to layer colors, create texture, combine different media, use a variety of tools, and expand your mark making. Open to anyone with prior painting experience; includes instructor demos plus group and individual discussions. Limited seating. Registration: $300/members; $350/non-members. New Hanover County Arboretum Classroom, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 233-7507 or www.wilmingtonart.org.

True Beauty

On Saturday, January 7, the "I Am Beautiful Fashion Show" features individuals with disabilities showing the world true beauty and confidence. Doors open at 7 p.m. Donations accepted; raffles available. Proceeds benefit the Miracle League of Wilmington. Pine Valley United Methodist Church, 3788 Shipyard Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (937) 408-3370 or www.pvumc.net.

Something Old, Something New

North Carolina Junior Sorosis and North Carolina Sorosis, the oldest Federated Women's Club in the state, present the forty-fifth annual Wilmington Antique Show and Sale on Friday, January 23, through Sunday, January 25. Featuring over thirty-five dealers, the show and sale will include fine early American and English furniture, primitives, vintage items such as linens, clothing, toys and jewelry, plus silver, fine china, crystal, rugs, paintings, collectables and more. New to the show this year: restoration resource providers available to repair your beloved treasures. Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Sunday from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Tickets, $7, cover admission for all three days of the show. All proceeds benefit community charities and projects; silent auction benefits Cape Fear Communities in Schools. Coastline Convention Center, 501 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonantiqueshow.com.

Poetic Nonsense

We at *Salt* love a good poem – blank verse, sonnets . . . the occasional pantoum. But even our most scholarly staffers can't resist a well-crafted limerick. Which is why we invite you, dear reader, to submit your own to *Salt* magazine's 2015 Cape Fear Limerick Contest. Clean or blue, your poem must contain either "cape" or "fear" in one of its five lines.

An example:

There once was a boy with a cape,

which he made from the living room drape,

and when he tried to fly

his mother's reply:

Your hide shall be mine to re-shape!

The guidelines are simple:

- Limerick must include "cape" or "fear"
- Submissions must be original and unpublished
- One submission per entrant
- Deadline: February 15, 2015

How to submit:

Email your submission to ashley@saltmagazinenc.com using the subject line "Cape Fear Limerick Contest"

Include your name, telephone number and mailing address in the body of the email.

Winning entries will be published in *Salt* magazine. Contest is open to any resident of New Hanover, Brunswick or Pender counties.

True-Blue Talent

The Steep Canyon Rangers, a Grammy-winning bluegrass band from Brevard, North Carolina, retreat from rugged terrain for a freewheeling performance at Ziggy's by the Sea on Friday, January 16, 9 p.m. Having worked with famed producer Larry Campbell (think Bob Dylan and Levon Helm), the Rangers roam beyond musical boundaries, delivering a raw and immediate sound defined by nimble instrumental agility, tight vocal harmonies and original songwriting. Says songwriter and banjo extraordinaire Graham Sharp: "It took a lot of work for us to nose our way into the bluegrass world and become a de facto representative." Having reached the summit, the band now views their music as a "bridge between the bluegrass crowd and a wider audience." With their high-energy, propulsive performances, they're sure to make waves here. Tickets: $15/advance; $20/day of show. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096; ziggysbythesea.com; www.steepcanyon.com.

Thanks for a great start in 2014
We look forward to seeing you in 2015!

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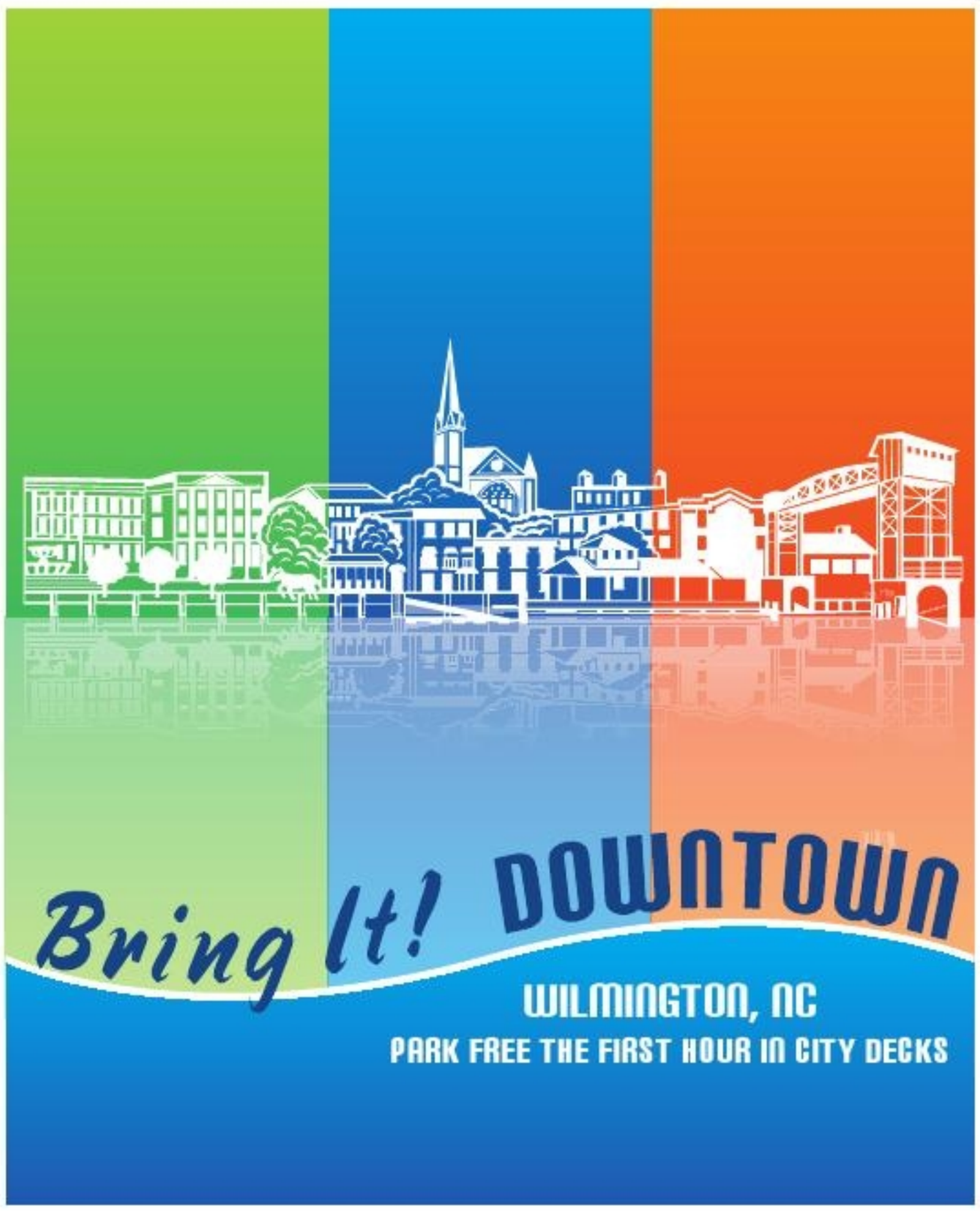

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Soap for the Soul

New Year, clean start

By Ashley Wahl

In many cultures,

the first day of the year is considered to be a sacred day of spiritual rebirth and good fortune — a time to cleanse the soul and reopen one's mind to the notion that anything is possible. Some take this soul-cleansing business literally. In Vancouver, for instance, plunging into the English Bay has been a New Year's Day tradition since 1920. Whether the frigid swim is intended to signify a clean slate or as a cure to a hangover is, of course, still up for debate.

This year, our own version of the polar bear plunge — the thirteenth annual Dolphin Dip at nearby Surf City on January 1 — was organized to raise funds for Ocean Cure, a local nonprofit that connects expert surf instructors with at-risk and medically challenged youth and adults. The event and organization are firmly rooted in the belief of the "powerful emotional and physical healing properties of the ocean and surfing."

The wave rippers that dot our beaches on raw winter mornings might be on to something. If each wipeout is like a spiritual rebirth — a new opportunity to set off into the great unknown and simply enjoy the ride — then perhaps each day calls for a reawakening.

*

Last year, for New Year's, we resolved to make laundry soap, which was not intended to serve as a symbol of our spiritual cleansing. We were on a budget. In addition to hot water, the recipe required three ingredients:

- one bar Fels-Naptha soap
- one cup Borax
- one cup Arm & Hammer Super Washing Soda

Once you grate and dissolve the bar, the task is a lot like watching a clock for five hours. Consider taking a surf lesson, running a marathon or reading a book. When you're done, two mason jars filled with highly concentrated laundry sauce will be waiting for you.

When you crunch the numbers, the total expense for 128 loads of laundry comes out at around $1.76. Until you decide to add fragrance.

*

At Down to Earth, the medieval-looking apothecary that perfumes Front Street from Grace to Walnut, owner Eva Horton creates custom aromas, herbal distillates and remedial concoctions, all of which she speaks about with an air of reverence.

Aromatic blends are Eva's specialty, but if you're looking for a single product — say, an essential oil to add to your homemade soap — she can tell you everything about it, from its medicinal properties to whether or not the fragrance will be clean, earthy or romantic.

Perhaps you're looking for lavender, the flowering herb once used to scent Roman baths. Or the man with whom you shared the proverbial midnight kiss might prefer a more masculine scent for his socks and skivvies — like rosemary or the woody aroma of juniper, said to evoke feelings of health, love and peace.

Maybe, without knowing it, your soap is becoming a symbol of your spiritual cleansing after all.

Turns out, what got Eva interested in aromas in the first place was watching her grandmother, eldest of eleven, save her cooking oil all year to make, no kidding, bumpy white laundry soap.

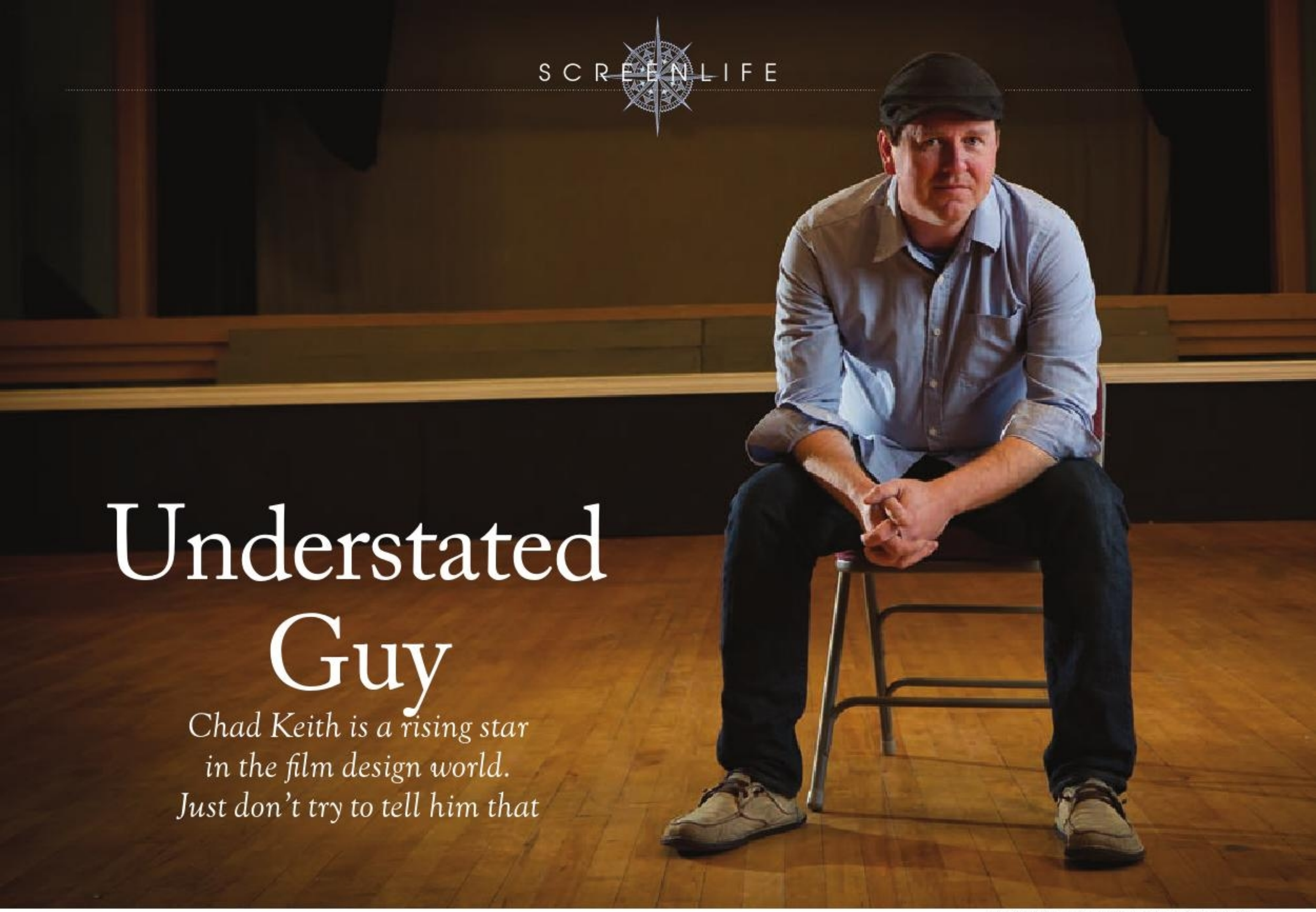
*

This new year, on the sacred day of spiritual rebirth and good fortune, we planted a redwood seedling that came from a gift shop out west (hence the budget), where the water really is too cold for swimming and the ancient trees, like our endless ocean, both dwarf and empower us.

Our tree, tall as my thumb, resembles a sprig of rosemary. But when you put things into perspective, so do we.

So here's to a new year. May yours be filled with endless possibility, and, if you're lucky, clean socks and skivvies.

Our spy, senior editor Ashley Wahl, is prone to wander.



Understated Guy

Chad Keith is a rising star in the film design world. Just don't try to tell him that

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

By Gwenyfar Rohler

"The first film I had in Sundance is when I had four movies there," recalls Chad Keith, production designer extraordinaire — *Take Shelter, Martha Marcy May Marlene, On The Ice*, and *Restless City*. After five years of going out to Sundance to see films and network with potential directors, it was quite a way to return to the festival. Then *Take Shelter* and *Martha Marcy May Marlene* both went to Cannes, the legendary film festival on the French Riviera. "I spent more on going to Cannes than I made on either of those movies," he says with a laugh. The designer in him takes over as he describes the beautiful seatown and all the lavish clothing people wore. Writers remember words, whereas designers remember images.

Keith is a naturally understated kind of guy whose intense, smiling eyes are the key to the good humor that buoys him through life. Usually seen wearing jeans and a paperboy hat with a dog nearby, he always has a grin and a kind word. Truthfully, he looks like any other mid-30s aspiring artist having coffee and chatting about music, art, film gossip and color theory. When I say he's really understated, I mean this, for example:

When we were trying to get times synched to talk for this piece, Chad mentioned that there was another interviewer he had to talk to for a different magazine.

"Which magazine?" I asked.

"Uh, *Variety*, I think. Yeah. That's it."

"Chad! That's incredible! Is it about a movie you worked on?"

"No, it's like '25 Young Filmmakers to Watch' . . . something like that . . ." He trails off and looks away.

Now, if it had been me, I would have rented a billboard to make such an announcement.

Not Keith, who has the same excited can-do attitude about the films he's designing as he did when he was on his first film set as an intern from UNCW on *Dawson's Creek*. Keith was a communication studies major at the very beginning of the Film Concentration that morphed into the Film Studies Department at UNCW. He's just one of a long line of film students at UNCW who began by interning with our local productions and have gone on to solid careers. Like many film technicians, Keith worked for a while as a production assistant until he landed in the art department and then it all came together for him. The literal transformation that a film crew does to a location was captivating: "I saw places changing — it was really

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN GUGGENHEIM

On the film "Wildlike" in Alaska

creative — get your hands on it and make a place become a different place. It was awesome to see it happen around me." Keith never looked back. But the jump from entry level position in the art department to the production designer responsible for the entire visual appearance of a film is a big leap to say the least. Keith just kept working and learning, and having a tremendous amount of fun. "Then I got offered a film — it was Anghus' [Houvouras'] first film, *Fearsome.* I think I had a $200 budget. And I think I had to build an electric chair and a graveside funeral . . . and I was, 'All right, let's jump in, let's make this happen.'"

That was 2003, so when did the big break happen?

Keith chuckles and sips his coffee as his beagle puppy, Kamper, trots past, patrolling the perimeter of the bookstore where we are sitting. It wasn't really a monetary big break, he explains, so much as it was a breakthrough in perception. "*Goodbye Solo* filmed in Winston-Salem. That went on to get in festivals and that was exciting and eye-opening knowing that a film was all over the world for people to watch, opening my eyes to that whole world of the festival circuit . . . " Keith trails off, savoring his memories from 2008 and since. Kamper jumps on his lap and brings him back to the present.

"I had really enjoyed working on the film and seeing where it went, because when you're making it you don't know what it's going to do." For Keith, building collaborative relationships has been key. *Going Solo* is a good example: Ramin Bahrani, the director, and Keith found a groove so when the next picture — the bigger picture — came around, Keith was one of the first people Bahrani called. "When you're working with a director on their smaller film then you're climbing with them through their process, which is great!" Keith notes. "The film I did, *Take Shelter,* with Jeff Nichols — that was around a million [dollars] and then the next thing you know I'm on his $25 million studio film. You take chances with smaller directors and it works out sometimes."

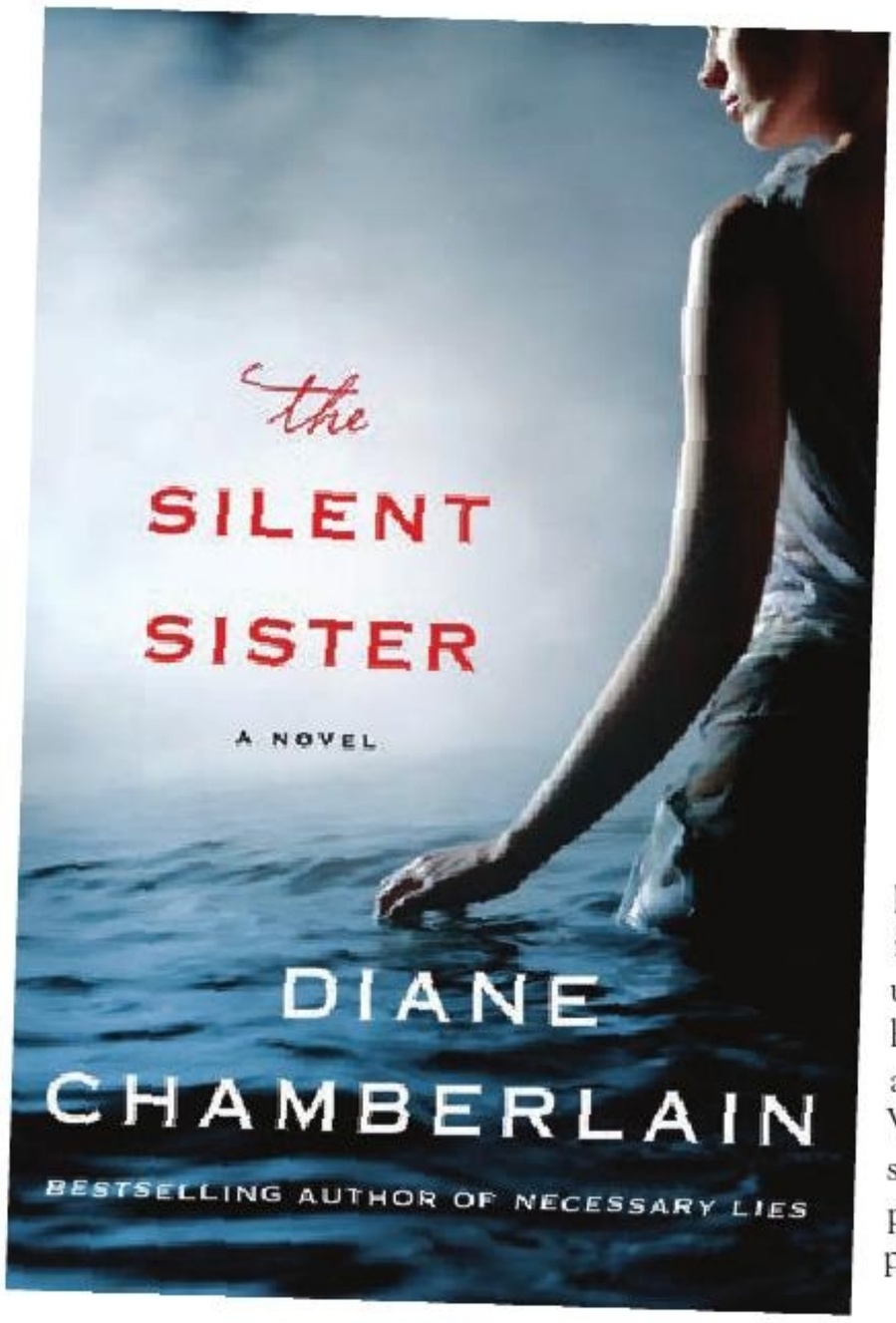
Now in high demand, Keith's star is soaring. But he's much more grounded in the creative process than jumping on a big budget wagon train. Whereas for many people career success is getting on the next bigger movie with the bigger named star, he reads scripts, constantly looking for something to work on that excites him. But he says it's more about "taking a chance at something I haven't done . . . I read a lot of scripts and there's a lot of similarity of what people are trying to make."

Keith pauses to pet Kamper. "I mean, if you're going to put four to six months of your life into something, you want to have fun doing it."

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

Not Quite Gone Girl

In the latest offering from veteran North Carolina writer Diane Chamberlain, a voice that never disappoints, there's no mystery why she's beloved by her fans



By Stephen E. Smith

"Why don't you review one of Diane Chamberlain's mysteries?" someone wrote in an October email. "She lives right here in North Carolina."

Good question. I'm always on the lookout for new work by interesting writers — discovery is the best part of writing reviews — and a North Carolina connection is always an enticement. Moreover, I hadn't read any of Chamberlain's novels (there are twenty-three of them), so I went online to track down her latest offering and came upon *The Silent Sister,* which was published by St. Martin's Press in October.

I'll admit I was something of a mystery aficionado when I was in high school. I still smile when I recall Sherlock Holmes telling Watson, "You have been to Afghanistan, I perceive," or how my eleventh-grade English teacher caught me concealing Mickey Spillane's *The Girl Hunters* in my lap when I should have been reading *Spoon River Anthology.* But since that time my interests have drifted elsewhere. Maybe it was time to revisit the genre.

I purchased *The Silent Sister* and dove in head first. What I discovered is that Chamberlain's latest novel isn't a mystery, not in the strict sense. There's no Sherlock Holmes or Mike Hammer, no startling perceptions or gratuitous violence. Rather, Riley MacPherson, a 20-something counselor who grew up in New Bern and now lives and works in Durham, returns to her childhood home on the North Carolina coast to settle her widowed father's estate. She's already grieving over a failed relationship with a married man, and the loss of her father only amplifies her concern for the mental well-being of her reclusive older brother Danny, who was wounded in Iraq.

To further complicate Riley's life, she'd had an older sister, Lisa, who was an aspiring concert violinist, and who, for reason unknown, committed suicide by drowning herself in the Potomac River when Riley was a toddler and the family lived in Northern Virginia. The details surrounding Lisa's suicide are vague enough to set this heavily plotted page turner off on a mind-tripping passage of discovery and reconciliation.

Chamberlain employs two points of view. Riley narrates in the first person, and Lisa's story is told in the third person. It's happenstance and Riley's casual curiosity that transform her into an accidental Sherlock Holmes. She is fed bits and pieces of the truth by old friends and acquaintances, and her late father had stashed away evidence of the family's former life, all of which drags the reader down the occasional blind alley while continually heightening the narrative tension.

You've probably already figured out that Lisa isn't dead. She is in fact living a full and rewarding life on the West Coast. After the teenage Lisa murdered her violin teacher, her father meticulously faked her suicide. And it's her disappearance that's the most intriguing aspect of the novel — the notion that it's possible to disappear into a world where technological intrusion seems to track our every movement, that it's possible to stumble upon a moment when we seriously consider a life vastly different from the one we've chosen, and that it's never too late to start over again, our mistakes behind us and our new life a clear but unknown path into a future unencumbered by recrimination. Riley's brother Danny has already made such a transition by cutting himself off from the community in which he came of age, and as a character he emerges occasionally to nudge the plot forward or to present himself as a catalyst for a couple of simple truths — there are no secrets, ever,

and justice isn't always served.

Chamberlain's timing is impeccable, and the reader is never left dangling on a plotless page. Her prose style is conversational, which is attributable to the fact that she suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and employs voice reorganization software to compose her novels, a technique which is, I can attest, more difficult than it sounds. Her sentences roll easily off the page: "What had she expected? She had to stop thinking about herself and start thinking about what was best for Riley and Danny and her parents. She'd turned their lies inside out. A move would definitely be the right thing for Danny. He could start fresh at a new school where no one knew about her. And Riley, barely two years old now, would never have to know about her murderous, suicidal sister at all." If you're seeking a prose stylist, look elsewhere. You'll find no poetic, hydra-headed Faulknerian syntax lurking in the 353 pages of this snappy novel. It's all straightahead storytelling.

There are, however, a couple of caveats. First, if you're the truck-driving-beer-swilling Marlboro man, you aren't going to find your groove in *The Silent Sister*. It's soapier than Ivory Snow, pure melodrama at its cloying best, a downsized, mainstream *Gone Girl* carefully crafted for Chamberlain's devoted fans, who are, if the publisher's puffery is correct, multitudinous. Second, as with many intricately plotted novels, there's little resonance. When you close the book, it's over. You won't be lying awake at night plagued by thematic implications that might apply directly to your life. If Chamberlain has something ethereal to impart, it's that there's a relationship between the past and the present, which should be obvious enough to any reader, and that life doesn't necessarily add up in the final accounting.

I suspect, too, that some readers will find the novel's conclusion somewhat predictable. In writing melodrama, the writer's chief enemy is stereotypical characters, and Chamberlain avoids that pitfall. But surprise is as important as suspense in novels of this ilk. By the time the reader is in the final chapters, the conclusion, with the exception of a few loose ends, confirms the reader's certainties and assumptions and moves too quickly to close out the narrative.

It's this simple. If you're a Chamberlain fan, *The Silent Sister* is a good read. You won't be disappointed. If you're into rat rods, tune in *Misfit Garage* on cable and crack a cold brew. You'll be happier.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com*

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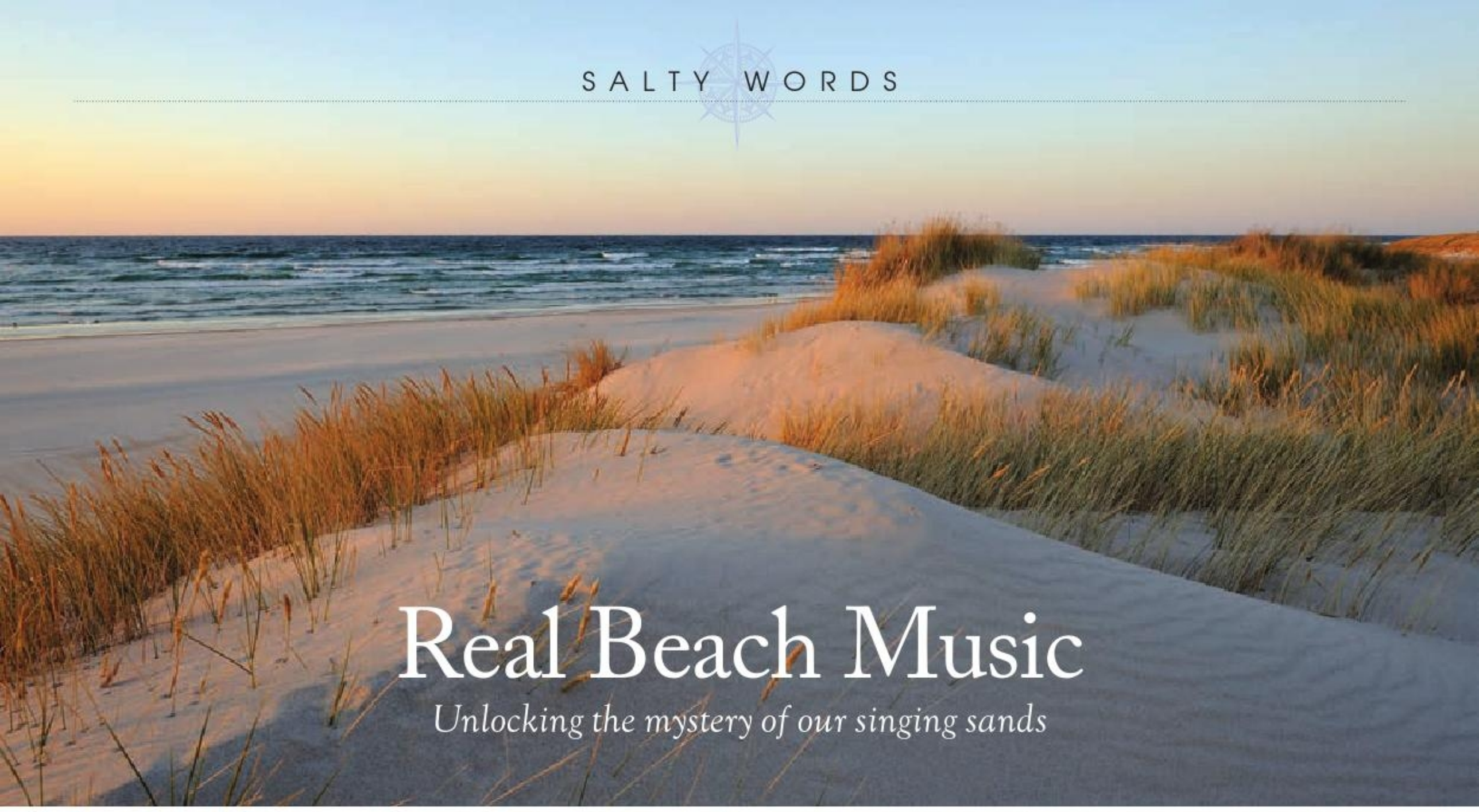

Real Beach Music

Unlocking the mystery of our singing sands

By Mary Syrett

Two summers ago, while traveling off-road among sand dunes near Carolina Beach, I heard something unusual: *music.* If you listen carefully, you, too, may discover that the sand at various locations among the dunes makes audible sound vibrations.

Sand dunes along North Carolina's coast seem to have built-in soundtracks — a phenomenon that has been reported from other widely separated dune areas. While the "music" emanating from the dunes can at times be compared to the strains of a chorus in the distance, the effect can also resemble the playing of violins.

Reverberations and vibrations oscillated into world headlines in 1969 when Apollo 12's astronauts sent Intrepid's descent stage crashing into the sandy Ocean of Storms on the moon. Scientists are still trying to understand the bell-like reverberations that were recorded through a moon-based seismometer. They lasted for fifty-five minutes after impact.

A sand dune, whether on the moon or along North Carolina's coast, would not seem to be a likely candidate as a natural sound generator. The fact is, however, dunes in many parts of the world squeak, roar or boom.

For more than a thousand years, literature has mentioned singing sands. In his thirteenth century travelogue in which he describes his experiences at the Mongol court of Kublai Khan, Venetian traveler Marco Polo frequently refers to musical sands and the superstitions attached to them.

The ancient Chinese knew of the phenomenon as well. One Chinese writer left an account of an area in Gansu province where noise-generating sand was noted in the ninth century. The document speaks of a "Hill of Sounding Sand" that was 500 feet high. According to the author, it possessed strange supernatural qualities: "The peaks taper up to a point, and between them there is a mysterious hole which the sand has not been able to cover up."

The writer observed that in the summer, if men or horses trod upon the hill, sounds could be heard for great distances. The manuscript spoke of a custom that was used to induce singing sands: "It is customary during the Dragon Festival for men and women from the city to clamber up to the highest points and rush down again in a body, which causes sand to give forth a rumbling noise. Yet when you look at it the next morning, the hill is found to be just as steep as before. The ancients called this the 'Hill of Sounding Sand'; they deified the sand and worshipped it."

In the Western Hemisphere, essayist and poet Henry David Thoreau came upon singing sands while walking on a New Hampshire Atlantic Ocean beach. He noted the sound resembled that made by rubbing a finger over wet glass.

British naturalist Charles Darwin was the first scientist to examine the phenomenon. In his book *A Naturalist's Voyage Round the World*, an entry for April 19, 1832, reads: "Leaving Socego, we retraced our steps. It was very wearisome work, as the road ran across a hot, sandy plain, near the coast. I observed that each time the horse put its foot on the fine siliceous sand, a chirping noise was produced."

Some 300 years ago, a strange Middle Eastern legend arose. It concerned a monastery buried in sand for centuries, the bells of which continued to give off a drawn-out ringing note. People passing by were awestruck as they came within earshot of the mysterious ringing dune. European pilgrims also heard a prolonged sonorous sound. But the place where they heard it was deserted, with no priests or other human beings in sight.

Intensely curious, Darwin decided to investigate the legendary "Mountain of the Bell." Visiting the locale, he sat down on a rock and asked a guide to climb up the sand mountain on the "musical" side. "It was not until the guide had reached some distance," Darwin wrote, "that I perceived the sand to be in motion, rolling down the hill. In the beginning, the sound might be compared to that of a harp when its strings first catch the breeze. As the increased velocity of the descent agitated the sand, the noise more nearly resembled that produced by drawing a moistened finger over glass. As

it reached the base, the reverberations sounded like distant thunder."

Musical sounds, such as those Darwin heard, occur in localities widely distributed over Earth's surface. Best known, perhaps, is on the island of Eigg, off Scotland's western coast. Anthropologist Hugh Miller, in his book *The Cruise of the Betsey* (1858), first described the sounds heard there. Miller noted that when he kicked the Eigg sands at an oblique angle, they gave off "a shrill note, resembling that produced by a waxed thread when tightened between teeth and a hand, then tripped by a forefinger."

Other places where "singing sands" have been heard include Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge on the South Carolina coast, Rockaway Beach on Long Island, the western coast of Wales, the island of Bornholm off the coast of Denmark, and New South Wales, Australia.

What produces the sounds heard along North Carolina's coast and elsewhere? The sound of sands may involve thin films of gas, deposited and condensed upon the surface of grains during evaporation. Such films may act as elastic cushions separating the quartz grains. These cushions are capable of considerable vibration, which may be translated into sound, produced after any quick disturbance of sand.

Another possible explanation is that certain sandy stretches of beach are bathed in waters which contain various salts, including calcium and magnesium bicarbonates. When water dries, the salts coat the grains and, when friction is applied, may produce a sound somewhat comparable to the action of rosin on the bow of a violin.

The "singing" of sand may be the audible consequence of billions of minute crystals being tumbled and rolled one against another by wind. Or, since "singing" is sometimes more pronounced after sundown, another theory could hold true: A mass of sand absorbs heat during the day and, with nightfall, as each sand particle cools and contracts, a dune shifts and settles; in such movement, sounds may originate.

Spontaneous music arising from beach and desert sands around the world has long captivated the imagination of writers and scientists. The next time you're hiking or traveling off-road along a Carolina beach, especially in the quiet of a summer or fall evening, keep an ear out for one of the strangest, most hauntingly beautiful concerts ever to come from nature. Yes, singing sands are a natural curiosity, a phenomenon in Mother Nature's bag of tricks that astonishes all who hear them.

Mary Syrett is a freelance writer and a student of coastal environments.

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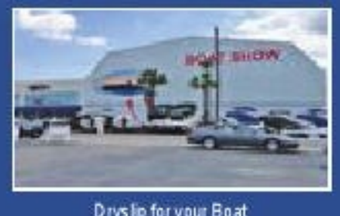
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Well Traveled but Finally Home

Christopher Wheeler, Ports of Call in Southport

By Jason Frye

What makes a chef great? The ability to create excellent food, certainly, with a strong presence on the plate and in the kitchen, too, but it's more than that. A great chef is someone who, through his or her culinary output, enriches the community and excites his or her diners. A great chef can be in a white-tablecloth restaurant or a taco truck or anything in between. In this new series, *Great Chefs of the Cape Fear*, we're going to break bread with some of the best chefs in the region. We'll get their takes on barbecue, foie gras, seafood, vegetarian dishes, ethnic food and dishes that are distinctly Southern. These chefs will be our guides as we explore a culinary landscape as deep as the Cape Fear River and as varied as the surrounding countryside.

Southport comes alive in the summer. The former fishing village sits at the point where the Cape Fear River, Intracoastal Waterway and Atlantic Ocean meet. Oak Island and Caswell Beach are a short drive away, and the solitude of Bald Head Island is achievable by a twenty-minute ferry ride. From the town's waterfront park, you can see two lighthouses — Old Baldy and the Oak Island Lighthouse — and, on one of these busy summer days, hordes of tourists. At the water-view restaurants, the lines are long; at the landlocked restaurants a block away, the lines are long. But locals know where it's worth the wait and where they should make a Friday night reservation. Ports of Call is one of those places.

Come winter, the town's a different place. The crowds are gone, parking's a breeze, and it's quiet. Southport becomes the small town it remembers. Even so, Ports of Call stays busy, and you'll want a reservation even in midweek. Chef Christopher Wheeler is to blame for this. The food he and his culinary team put out six days a week is some of the best in Southport and has earned him quite a following among the locals.

"The concept behind Ports of Call fits right in with my own culinary ideas," Wheeler says. "I like to take influences from all over and bring them together in a menu if not on the plate."

Ports of Call is a fitting name for a restaurant in a seafaring town. There's the implication of seafood — a prominent feature on Wheeler's menus — and the idea of "visiting" various ports by drawing dishes, ingredients and flavors from each stop. Though the menu's largely Mediterranean, Wheeler's devotion to Southern cuisine and his love for Southwestern flavors shine through here and there.

"As soon as the doors open, we're busy, and it's like that all year long," says Wheeler.

But he likes the fiery energy of a busy kitchen because it takes him back to his start in the business. After the expected stint as a busboy and dishwasher, Wheeler found himself at a P. F. Chang's in Charlotte, where he was a prep cook, and at Outback, where he worked on the line as a grill cook.

"How many dishes did I prep for or cook in those three years? I don't know. It's uncountable, but certainly more than you'll cook in most culinary schools," he says.

After his three years of high-volume, high-pressure cooking, he was ready for a change, and change, in the form of a grandfather in need of some live-in help, found him.

"I moved to Southport in 2003. At first, it was only going to be for a couple of months and I was going to help out my grandfather while he was dealing with some heart problems. Now, more than ten years later, I'm still here, and I'm designing menus and cooking in one of the best restaurants in Southport."

When Wheeler arrived, he began to look for work and found a spot on the line at the Founders Club in St. James Plantation, a gated community just north of Southport. There, under Chef Kent Stanton, he got a real culinary education.

"Working in those busy kitchens prepared me for how hard I worked under [Chef Stanton], but nothing prepared me for the work ethic he displayed and expected from each of the kitchen brigade," Wheeler says.

Wheeler would arrive at work at 8 a.m. to find Chef Stanton there with seven or eight stockpots going, pans of sauce reducing on the stove, and work-

ing a pile of ingredients.

"In his kitchen, you would walk in and go. Everything you did had a purpose, and there wasn't much wasted time or motion," says Wheeler. "He taught me a lot, much more than the year I spent in culinary school, and I credit much of who I am as a chef to his work with me."

As he says, who Wheeler is as a chef fits right in with the personality and concept driving Ports of Call — big flavors, an adventurous spirit, and an approach to food that's both refined and familiar, influenced by far-flung ports and the local catch. His menu — which includes tapas and entrées — has won him all sorts of loyalty in Southport among locals and visitors alike. While *Safe Haven* was filming in town, Ryan Seacrest surprised Julianne Hough with a six-course birthday party here; scenes were filmed inside the restaurant; and Seacrest, Hough, Josh Duhamel and other actors and crew from the movie frequented Ports of Call; those are some notable visitors indeed.

Corncakes

This at-home version of the corncakes Chef Wheeler serves at Ports of Call has a wide range of applications, from simple country fare like greens and beans to barbecue to Southwestern dishes. To make a no-hassle version at home, Wheeler recommends using a high-quality cornbread mix, but if you have your granny's cornbread recipe down pat, use that instead.

1 package cornbread mix
Ingredients from cornbread package directions
1 roasted red pepper, peeled and diced
2 jalapeños, seeded and diced
1/2 cup corn
Goat cheese
Honey

Prepare your cornbread according to package directions or recipe. Whisk or fork in the diced red peppers and jalapeños, and corn. Let batter rest for a few minutes.

While the batter rests, heat a thin coat of oil in a pan until oil shimmers. Spoon in batter, making small rounds a little larger than a silver-dollar pancake. Flip after 2–3 minutes or when the bottom becomes set and begins to brown. After flipping the corncakes, let them cook 1 minute, then press them gently with your spatula; if no batter comes out the sides, they're done.

When your corncakes are ready, remove them from the pan and place on a papertowel-lined cookie sheet to drain. (If you're making a large batch, you can hold finished corncakes in a 200 degree oven.) Spoon in another round of corncakes and cook as above.

Once you've cooked a batch of corncakes, arrange on a platter, top with goat cheese and drizzle with honey.

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

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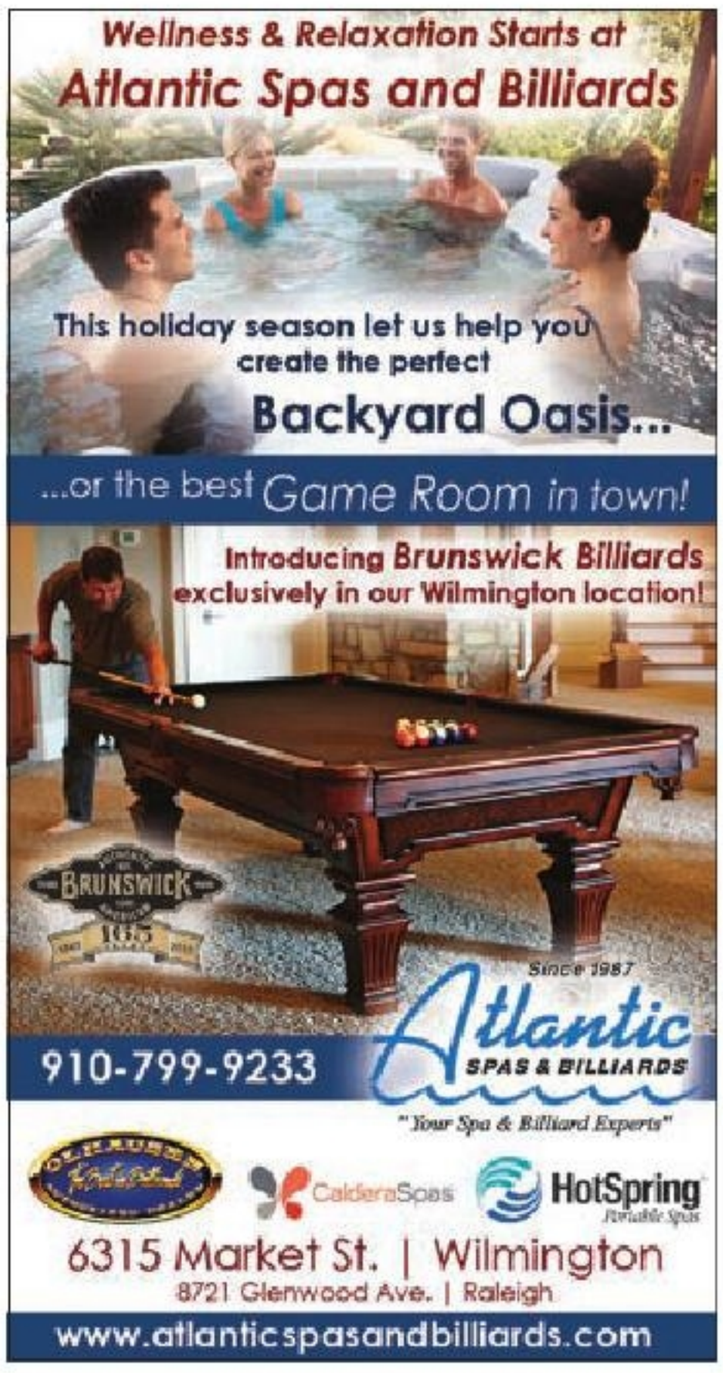
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Better Thank Mr. Darcy

Lunch at La Kumbala with Billy Worthy is a treat on every front

By Dana Sachs

Let me seat you next to Billy Worthy, Jr., at your next formal dinner party. His lively conversation on a wide variety of subjects — from Scipio Africanus and racial profiling to salsa dancing and Jane Austen — will continually engage you. Plus, he's mad about pupusas. (More on those later.)

Billy has thrived on change and uncertainty, and he tries to pass that resilience along to the young people he works with at Wilmington's Coastal Horizons Center. The program offers mental health support to at-risk youth and their families, aiming to keep kids and teens in their homes and, as Billy put it, "leave them in a better situation than when we found them."

In 2005, Billy graduated from Winston-Salem State University with "no idea" what he would do the next day. Over the following five years, he worked as a temp, a college residence director (his first real job, from which he was fired), a janitor, and a mentor for teens. Then he joined the Peace Corps, which sent him to Costa Rica.

Billy arrived there in 2010, full of "big ideas about all these things that I was going to do — build roads, that sort of thing." He was 28, simultaneously enrolled in a master's program at Oklahoma State's School of International Studies, and full of ambition.

All the grand plans fell apart, though, as they often do for people working in a different culture. "It humbles you," Billy admitted, but the failure helped him adapt.

Billy lived in the northeastern part of Costa Rica, in a town called La Aldea de Sarapiquí, which sounds exquisite, by the way, when he says it in Spanish. Over time, he discovered that he could succeed at small-scale ventures that use the skills of local people. Together, they built a park behind a school, turning trees downed by a flood into benches and picnic tables. He taught English and HIV/AIDS prevention to children and helped adults learn to use the Internet and cellphones. When he discovered that many older people didn't use phones because they couldn't read numbers, he taught them their numbers, too.

The challenges didn't disappear. "I could never say that I was black," he told me, explaining that many Costa Ricans equated "black" with "criminal." "I had to say that I was moreno, or 'brown.'" His original host family, puzzled by his hair and dark skin, asked him to move out, citing "cultural differences."

Not that racism was a total unknown for a young African-American. When

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

Billy's father first taught him to drive, he offered all the typical parental advice, then added a secondary set of precautions meant to keep a young black man safe if the police pulled him over: "Take your registration out of the glove compartment. Keep your right hand at 12 o'clock on the steering wheel. Hold your left out the window, with license and registration, so they can always see your hands." In short, never give an officer a reason to think you're reaching for a gun.

At Coastal Horizons, Billy can empathize with African-American teens. "Sometimes it feels like open season on black men," he told me, "and with all that's going on nationally, you have to be careful." As a counselor, however, he works with young people from many backgrounds. He stresses that every person should be held accountable for his or her actions. "A big thing," he said, "is just taking responsibility for your life."

Legend has it that Scipio Africanus sowed salt into the soil of lands he conquered, making it nearly impossible for those nations to recover. Similarly, many of the kids Billy works with come from "places where salt has been ingrained in the community, so growth has been difficult."

Billy asks his clients to think beyond the world they know. "Experience something outside of what you see on your block," he'll say. His own life is a testament to the value of trying new things. In college, for example, Billy learned salsa dancing. After he returned from Costa Rica, he felt brave enough to ask a woman he didn't know to dance with him. Now, they are planning to get married. "You have to show up," he tells his young clients. "You have to try."

For our lunch, Billy suggested we meet at the Central American restaurant La Kumbala. He goes there often for pupusas, which are stuffed tortillas filled with pork, refried beans, or melted cheese. Mellow and tasty on their own, pupusas also serve as a perfect base for La Kumbala's homemade sauces.

Although the restaurant serves typical Mexican dishes, its Central American and regional specialties make it unique. Billy guided me through the menu, offering, among other tips, a primer on sliced plantains. "You can either smash and then fry them or you can fry and then smash them, and the difference affects the crust." Green plantains are used to make tostones, a bland, potato-like fried disk. Black plantains have a softer consistency, and, when grilled, create a luscious accompaniment to Cena Hondureña, a hearty Central American version of steak and eggs. Try it with a cold glass of sweet Salvadoran horchata, made from morro fruit. It tastes like peanut-butter milk.

We tried one dish that was new to Billy. Molcajete Oaxaqueño, a staple from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, is a rich kitchen-sink stew of beef, pork, chicken and shrimp that arrives in a heated stone pot. The dish is so unusual and delicious that it stopped conversation at our table. Billy spooned some of its green sauce onto a pupusa. "Oh, man," he finally said.

When Billy himself feels uncertain, he thinks of Fitzwilliam Darcy, Jane Austen's hero in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. "He seems like a cool dude," Billy explained. "He's always a gentleman, even when he's upset." In shortened form, the question Billy asks himself goes like this: "WWMDD?" Translated: What Would Mr. Darcy Do?

I remember Darcy as stuffy and sullen, so, if I found my name card next to his at some country house dinner, I'd switch it and sit next to Billy Worthy instead. In stressful situations, Billy remains a gentleman, too, and he's more fun to chat with.

La Kumbala Lounge and Restaurant is located at 7213 Market Street and is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. – 9 p.m., and Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. – 2 a.m. For more information, call (551) 655-2311 or visit lakumbala.com. For more information about Coastal Horizons Center, visit www.coastalhorizons.org.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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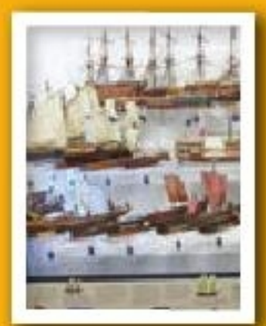

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Touching the Nothing

In a float tank off Kerr Avenue, our intrepid cosmic traveler finds a new universe

By Jason Frye

The fireflies blink in the air above you, silent, swarming, separating, moving like starlings, one strange unit of phosphorescence made of thousands. Drifting like motes of light, they continue their orbit. They pin themselves to the black, becoming moth-eaten holes in the fabric surrounding you.

Measured against your breath, they glow, pulse, grow bright and dim, bright and dim. Whole constellations of them. A cosmos spread out before you.

They grow brighter, searing holes in the blackness, and you fall toward them, rushing through space faster and faster. The stars elongate, Doppler shift from green to blue to indigo near as dark as the nothing around them.

You feel it: You've pushed through into another place. The dark here cradles you, comforts you, whispers to you. The fireflies are gone. You're nowhere.

*

It's strange to say this is what happened, but this is what happened. The very first time I spent an hour in the float tank — a lightless, soundless box filled with warm salt water, designed to remove as much external stimuli as possible — I touched the nothing.

Float tanks were developed in 1954 by Dr. John C. Lilly, a physician, neuroscientist, psychoanalyst, philosopher, writer and, perhaps most interestingly, psychonaut — an explorer of the internal self achieved through means of altered states of consciousness. In essence, tanks are huge fiberglass boxes filled with water heated to 98 degrees and loaded with 800 pounds of Epsom salts, making the water the same temperature as your skin and dense enough for you to be completely buoyant. When you step inside and close the door, all light is extinguished and all sound gone.

The only thing you can hear is you. The rush of blood through artery, capillary and vein. The blink of an eyelid. The relaxing of muscles. The rhythm of your breath.

The only things you see are what you bring with you.

*

Inside the tank, it's a little disorienting at first. It takes a moment for the water to settle after you've stopped moving, but when it does, it's like being in zero gravity. Then it hits you: You can't feel your skin. Since the water's approximately the same temperature as your body, it's difficult to tell where you end and the water begins.

That's when, for me, things start to get interesting.

I close my eyes or not, I'm not sure, but I give myself over to letting go. Deep breath in and hold and exhale. My joints creak and crack. My muscles release their tension. My heart slows. I let go of my physical self.

Letting go of the ego and settling my mind is a little more difficult. Gradually the ego quiets and I stop thinking about myself, my failures and successes, my week, my work, and break through to a still place. In that still place, my body is gone and I'm just thought, consciousness alone in what may as well be a whole universe.

For a long while, there's nothing.

I fall asleep or I don't. I see mountains distant and dark or I dream them. Either way, fireflies rise from grass and the trees and call one another with the light from their abdomens. They swarm and separate, bright then gone. Bright then gone.

*

When I emerge from the tank and re-enter the real world, I'm disoriented. Dressing in the back of Drift and Dream, it takes me a moment to recognize that I'm here, in Wilmington, in an unassuming office off Kerr Avenue, and I just had an experience somewhere between spiritual and psychedelic. When I step into the reception area, I almost don't hear the question posed to floaters as he or she emerges from their isolation cocoon.

"Did you touch the nothing?"

At first, the question doesn't register. Then it doesn't make sense. Then I realize that I did.

"Yes," I say.

"What was it like?"

"Intense," I say. "Once I let go, it was intense, but relaxing, cleansing."

"It always is."

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

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Wise Thoughts from the Road

And under the influence of a full bladder

By Bill Thompson

Over the course of nearly half a century, I have traveled thousands of miles alone in an automobile. Much of that time was spent doing just about anything to stay awake, especially on those long night drives home after a speaking engagement somewhere when I was too cheap to rent a room for the night. To fight off sleep, I would roll the windows down and let the cold air blow through, turn the radio up as loud as it would go, and drink lots of water without taking a rest stop. The latter not only worked to keep me awake, it caused me to think of a lot of weird stuff so I could get my mind off the need for a rest stop. In this self-induced agony I would become quite philosophical.

Several days ago I tried to remember some of those trips when I found a small tape recorder I used to take with me that had some of those musings still recorded on it. In reviewing the tape, I found that some of my thoughts were relevant only to the time of the recording, some are things I heard or read somewhere else, and some are timeless reflections of a mind being tortured by an exceedingly full bladder. Here are a few excerpts:

Nobody will ever put out a sign that says GOOD DOG.

There is no such thing as "a simple little job around the house." Every job becomes complex because I either don't have the proper tools or someone comes along who will tell me a better way to get the job done.

Eventually, everything we do or eat will kill us.

I believe that smoking is the leading cause of statistics. Never in the history of mankind has anything been so studied by so many with so little objectivity.

You should never eat prunes when you are hungry.

I believe that it is logical to assume that a large person will use more soap than a small person. In all honesty, I have no empirical evidence to substantiate that statement, and the possibility of gathering any is most unlikely given the nature of the study.

There is no such thing as half a hole. (I think I first heard that from my grandfather.)

You can't convince a stoplight that you are in a hurry. In fact, I don't think we should argue with inanimate objects. Not only is it a waste of time, but we will lose the argument.

Nobody really cares about apathy.

There's more to making love than the exercise. The older I get the more convinced I am that this is true.

The man that invented the eraser had a lot of insight into human nature. However, his genius would have been wasted had not someone invented the graphite pencil.

The most useless marketing effort in the world is the sale of scented toilet tissue.

I thought about the supermarket tabloid headline that read (actually, the paper didn't read the headline, I did): "Twin brother and sister have sex change." I wondered if their parents said, "Well, look at it this way: We lost a son but we gained a daughter and vice versa."

Most people use credit cards because they don't have money in the bank to cover the purchase.

The United States Constitution has to be the greatest document ever written. How else could this country have survived all the politicians who have tried to manipulate it?

In this imperfect world there is not a solution to every problem, but there is a problem for every solution.

The government can never be run like a business because the boss (or bosses) can be fired by the employees.

I am convinced that the best definition of infinity is one lawyer waiting on another. This is based on my experience in dealing with lawyers on a daily basis.

If other people's problems ceased to exist, most of us wouldn't have anything to talk about.

A couple of observations came to mind as I reflected on this old recording: (1) The practice of abstaining from taking restroom breaks has led to my frequent bouts with kidney stones; (2) It is a good thing that I have stopped taking long trips at night by myself. I feel sure that the continuance of such activity would have led to full-blown insanity.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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Reunion Blues

After all these years, sugar, am I crazy to want to be an aging cheerleader's dream come true?

By Ann Ipock

As I sit down to write this column, I can't stop thinking about my upcoming high school reunion and all my old classmates, some of whom I haven't seen since my cheerleading days. I can almost hear their voices in my head:

Reunion? I wouldn't miss it for the world.
I wouldn't go if you paid me.
How can I lose fifty pounds in six months?
Will they know it's a toupée?
I can't wait to catch up with old friends.
I wonder what ever happened to so-and-so?
I never did like so-and-so.
I hope they're serving wine.
Plenty of wine . . .

As for me, I wouldn't miss it for the world. I've attended two of our previous reunions, the last one being so far back I forgot when it was. It was held in the National Guard Armory. I only remember a handful of my old friends being there.

This reunion is bound to be better. One reason being it's for multiple classes, 1967–1971 (I'm class of '70), at the country club of my hometown. So, a.) I like the idea of having other classes join, especially since I have two older sisters who are invited, b.) It'll be much cozier than that cold, cement-floor building from the last time, and c.) I've reconnected with several friends on Facebook from all over the country (one, in particular, who just moved back from Japan, where she and her husband taught school).

But like so many people, I *am* trying to lose fifty pounds (well, OK, fifteen) and I'm wishing I had fewer wrinkles and more height. I don't want to say I have worried per se, but I have spent many hours looking for the perfect clothes, shoes and jewelry for the occasion. I thought I found the perfect outfit, but then I changed my mind. A few times. Also, I've just realized that the reunion falls halfway between my normal, six-week hair appointments for color and cut. Should I call my hairstylist and reschedule? I'll need a mani-pedi. Should I just do my own? I'm running out of time, too. Am I crazy for wanting everything to be perfect?

I'll admit that I've done a little daydreaming about what this night could be like. This is my fantasy: I walk into the gala and several old boyfriends hurry over to greet me, admiring my girlish looks and cute-as-ever personality. A couple of girlfriends ask, "Who does your hair?" followed by, "I love your shoes!" My husband, Russell, will whisk me off to the dance floor to every song being played (now I'm *hallucinating*). I will eat multiple rich, velvety-chocolate desserts with no guilt and won't gain a pound. Wine? Bring it on, honey. I'll drink several glasses and won't have a headache the next morning.

Oh, and best of all, I find out that one of my classmates is now the CEO of Random House, Penguin, Simon and Schuster, Algonquin, or some other publisher that "gets me." She/he offers me a contract right on the spot. A four-book deal . . . Then, Kathie Lee Gifford and Hoda Kotb from *The Today Show* walk in with their entourage. They are going to make a movie about this entire event. (As it turns out, my friend, the publisher, knew about all of this in advance. Wink. Wink.) And when I start to leave, all of my old friends who knew me "way back when" are interviewed. What was Ann like in school? Lord, I hope none of my old teachers will be there.

And as you can imagine, the rest is history.

My hubby, Russell, says I'm a legend in my own mind. But don't be so quick to pooh-pooh my story. Anything can happen in this day and time. A kid says "apparently" at just the right moment on TV and he's an overnight sensation. A video is made, a spoof on Burger King, titled "Bon Qui Qui," and it goes viral. And finally, for real, people, I did star as Truvy in the Murrells Inlet community theater production of *Steel Magnolias*. Who knows, maybe a director has been searching for me ever since? And here I am, dressed to the nines with my acceptance speech memorized.

Ann Ipock is an award-winning Southern author, humorist and speaker whose books include the Life is Short *series. She may be reached at amipock@ec.rr.com.*

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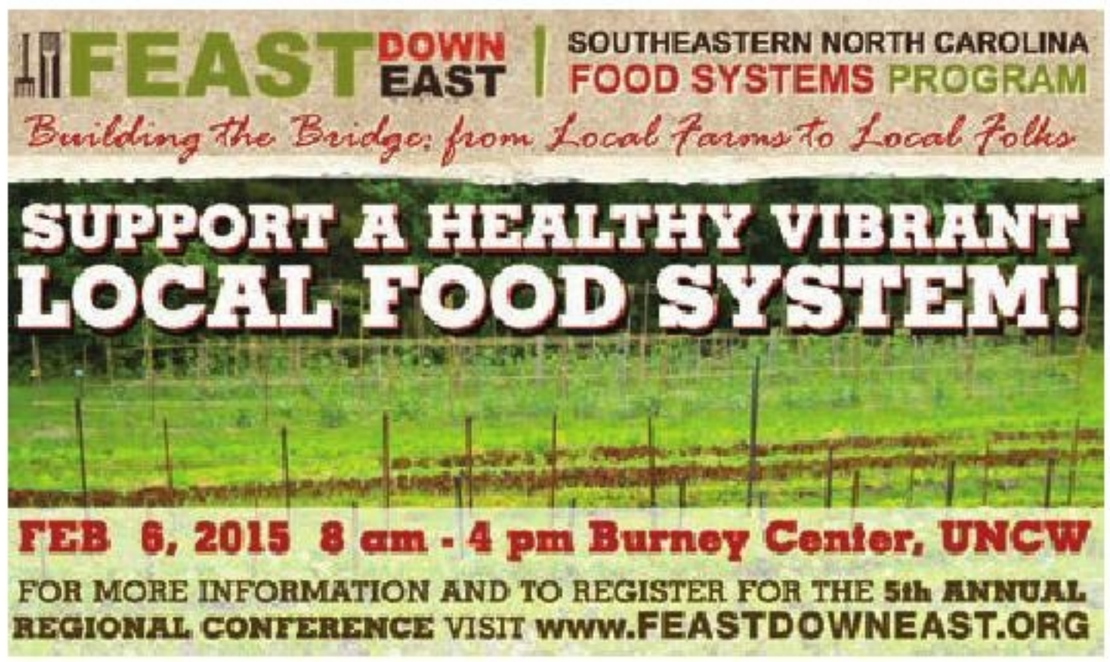
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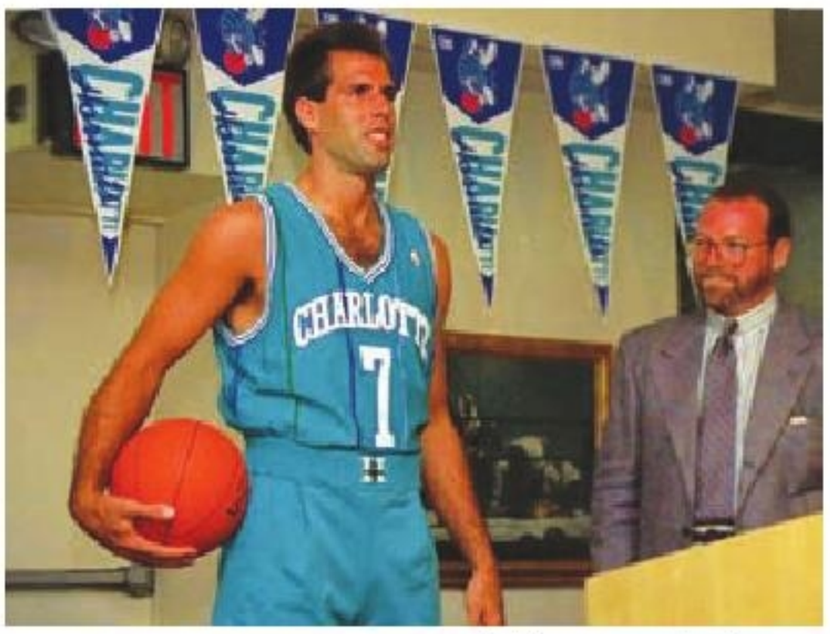
Dressed to Win

How designer Alexander Julian helped the Hornets get their colour groove on

By Wiley Cash



During my lifetime, my mother has gotten the jump on me only once when it comes to sports stories: In 1988 the Charlotte Hornets unveiled their new uniforms in a live press conference. That day, my mother called me down to our kitchen in Gastonia, North Carolina, where she stood staring at the tiny color television she always kept on the counter. The picture was small and the color wasn't great, but neither of us had any problem taking in the scene at the press conference as it unfolded just a few miles away in Charlotte. A well-dressed man in a dark pinstriped suit and round spectacles stood beside a tall man who appeared to be a model cut from the pages of the inches-thick merchandise catalogs that cluttered every coffee table and bathroom cabinet in the 1980s. The model wore a teal warm-up jacket and pants, and after tearing away the pants and removing the jacket he stood in a white Hornets' home uniform with fine pinstripes on the jersey and accents of purple and teal on the shorts. The model left the stage and returned moments later in what would be the Hornets' away uniform: a teal jersey with purple pinstripes and teal shorts with white trim.

The model was a seven-year NBA veteran named Kelly Tripucka. He'd played first with the Detroit Pistons and then with the Utah Jazz before being selected by the Hornets in the supplemental draft that would comprise the team's first roster. He'd go on to lead the team in scoring that season, and in 1991 he'd retire from the NBA as a Hornet. Alexander Julian was the name of the well-dressed man in the dark suit and round spectacles who shared the stage with Tripucka. At the time, Julian was more famous than any of the Hornets who would wear his uniform design during the team's inaugural season.

A native Tarheel, Alexander Julian was raised in Chapel Hill, where his father had owned and operated a men's clothing store called Julian's since 1942. In 1969, at the age of 19, Alexander opened his own store in Chapel Hill, and by the mid-70s he would move to New York and find himself on the cusp of becoming one of the most influential fashion designers in the world. But it wasn't until 1981, when he introduced a line of menswear called Colours by Alexander Julian, that he became both a fashion icon and a household name.

"You can't dictate fashion," Julian told me during a phone interview over homecoming weekend in Chapel Hill. "But I knew a lot of men had never worn bright colors before, so I was hoping it would be cathartic for them."

While men interested in wearing well-cut suits and bold ties were the first to embrace Julian's injection of color, it was soon embraced by everyone from marketing departments to teenyboppers. Coca-Cola found a way to sell merchandise emblazoned with its name and insignia by simply churning out everything from sweatshirts to baseball hats in colors reminiscent of those Julian had first employed. The Swiss watch company Swatch successfully battled the rising fad of digital watches by incorporating outlandish colors in the designs of their otherwise traditional mechanical watches. Jams, a brand of wildly patterned, knee-length shorts that was founded in the 1960s, suddenly exploded in popularity in the mid-80s. And of course we all remember Kirk Cameron's Day-Glo T-shirts, colorful Chuck Taylors, and neon button-downs when he starred in the sitcom *Growing Pains* from 1985 to 1992.

As Julian told me, perhaps you can't dictate fashion, but fashion can dictate many things.

The Hornets' uniforms, which combined purple with Julian's signature teal, revolutionized sportswear in the 1990s much in the same way Julian had already revolutionized clothing during the previous decade, and the effects were profound. Hornets' sportswear and team jerseys led the NBA in sales for a number of years, and by 1993 two of Major League Baseball's expansion teams — the Colorado Rockies and the Florida Marlins — had co-opted the Hornets' purple and teal. In 1995, the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars would use teal in their uniforms while the hometown Carolina Panthers would employ a slightly different shade of blue. Julian's teal found its way into the NBA again in 1996 when the Detroit Pistons altered their long-used team colors by using the teal that had made the Charlotte Hornets' uniforms and team merchandise so popular.

"I chose purple and teal because they look good with all skin tones," Julian told me. "I knew those colors would look good on everyone who wore them." Americans — both fans of sport and fans of fashion — felt the same way.

At the close of that 1988 press conference during which Julian introduced the Hornets' uniforms, Tripucka stepped down from the stage, where he was interviewed by a group of local reporters.

"I'm into light blues like this," Tripucka said, looking down at his uniform and smiling. "Teal, and I like the purple, the mauve. I like spring and summer colors." He thought for a moment about the man with whom he'd just shared the stage. "He's headed in the right direction." Tripucka was correct; Julian was headed in the right direction, and the fashion and sports world followed.

Wiley Cash is a New York Times *best-selling author whose second novel,* This Dark Road to Mercy, *was released in January 2014. He lives in Wilmington.*

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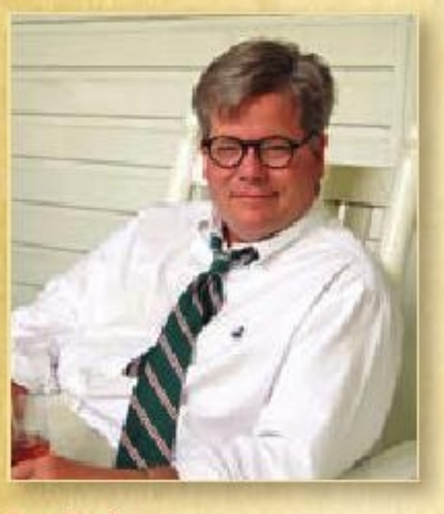
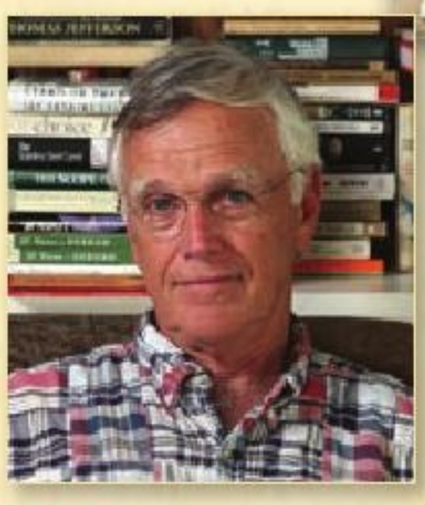


Jim Dodson is the Founding Editor of *O.Henry* **Magazine and the award-winning author of twelve books including** *Final Rounds*, *Faithful Travelers*, *The Road to Somewhere*, *Beautiful Madness*, *A Golfer's Life* **(with Arnold Palmer),** *Ben Hogan – An American Life*, **and** *American Triumvirate*. **He has served as Distinguished Writer in Residence at Hollins University and is the recipient of numerous writing awards including two Herbert Warren Wind Awards for the Book of the Year from the United States Golf Association.**

Jill McCorkle has the distinction of having her first two novels published on the same day in 1984 – *The Cheer Leader* **and** *July 7th*. **Since then she has published three other novels – her latest,** *Life After Life* **and four collections of short stories. McCorkle has taught at UNC-Chapel Hill, Tufts and Brandeis. She was a Briggs-Copeland Lecturer in Fiction at Harvard for five years. She currently teaches creative writing in the MFA Program at N.C. State University and is a core faculty member of the Bennington College Writing Seminars.**



Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a book of advice, a memoir, short stories and essays. His most recent is *Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers: Advice to Dads of All Ages*. **He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and five of his novels have been New York Times Notable Books. He is a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers and is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNC Wilmington. He lives in Wilmington, with his wife, Kristina, and their children.**

Frances Mayes, published poet and essayist, has written numerous books of poetry, including *Sunday in Another Country*, *After Such Pleasures*, *The Arts of Fire*, *Hours*, *The Book of Summer* **and** *Ex Voto*. *The Discovery of Poetry: A Field Guide to Reading and Writing Poems* **is used in college poetry classes. A food-and-travel writer, Mayes is best known for** *Under the Tuscan Sun*. **A memoir** *Under Magnolia*, **has just been published. She and her poet husband divide their time between Hillsborough and Cortona, Italy.**

Wiley Cash is *The New York Times* **best-selling author of** *A Land More Kind Than Home* **and** *This Dark Road To Mercy*. **Wiley holds a B.A. in Literature from the University of North Carolina-Asheville, an M.A. in English from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. Wiley teaches in the Low-Residency MFA Program in Fiction and Nonfiction Writing at Southern New Hampshire University. A native of North Carolina, he and his wife live in Wilmington.**

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Red-Headed Woodpecker

Despite its considerable charisma, this gorgeous monarch is poorly understood

By Susan Campbell

"Red-headed woodpecker" is a term commonly used when one is referring to woodpeckers in our state. Indeed, of the eight species found in North Carolina, all can have at least some red feathering on their heads, although, ironically, the endangered red-cockaded has very little. Only the male red-cockaded has any red feathering – the "cockades" are the tiny red streaks on each side of his head, which aren't visible unless the bird is alarmed and at very close range. But in four species – pileated, red-bellied, yellow-bellied sapsucker and red-headed – there is considerable red feathering on the head of both sexes. It is only the red-headed, however, whose head and neck are completely red.

Without a doubt, this woodpecker is my favorite of all the North American birds. The combination of such beautiful plumage and its feisty personality makes it very special. And this bird is no stranger, whether in our pine woodlands or hardwood forests. It roosts and nests in cavities (including large bird boxes) and can be found throughout our area year-round.

Male and female birds are identical, with black back, tail and wingtips. In contrast, underside, rump and wing patches are white, which makes the bird easy to identify in flight. It is the dark red head that makes this bird unmistakable. Young-of-year red-headeds are mostly a scaly gray, but they have the same white wing patches as the adults. Their loud, insistent vocalizations instantly give them away in the late summer as they trail around begging to be fed by their parents.

In spite of its wide distribution and considerable charisma, the species is poorly understood. Red-headed populations have fluctuated greatly over time possibly due to fluctuations in local food sources. Although they are generalists with a diet composed of everything from fruits, nuts and flying insects to nestlings of other birds, they seem sensitive specifically to the abundance of acorns in the non-breeding season. Individuals may wander in the colder months if the local oak trees provide little nourishment.

Along the coast, red-headeds can be found throughout the year. Wherever there are older hardwood trees, especially oaks, you may spot one. Live oaks, in particular, are at the top of the list of many Eastern songbirds. They are favored for not only their acorns but the insects attracted to their evergreen foliage as well as the abundant nooks and crannies of the bark. Plus, mature trees provide good cover from both the elements and predators from above and below.

This species of woodpecker is readily attracted to feeders. They have no trouble swallowing black oil sunflower seeds or peanuts whole. But red-headeds are even more interested in suet-type feeders for their highly fatty offerings. Especially in cold weather, they may then become regular visitors. Also, the availability of fresh water in a bird bath will bring these birds into view. Watch for their distinct pattern and listen for their shrill call. Yes, a red-headed woodpecker may be closer than you think.

Susan would love to hear from you. Send wildlife sightings and photos to susan@ncaves.com or call (910) 949-3207.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBRA REGULA

Rachel's Lake

A particular treasure in winter, Lake Mattamuskeet stole the heart of famed naturalist Rachel Carson. Fortunately it remains much as it was in her day – and may steal yours, too

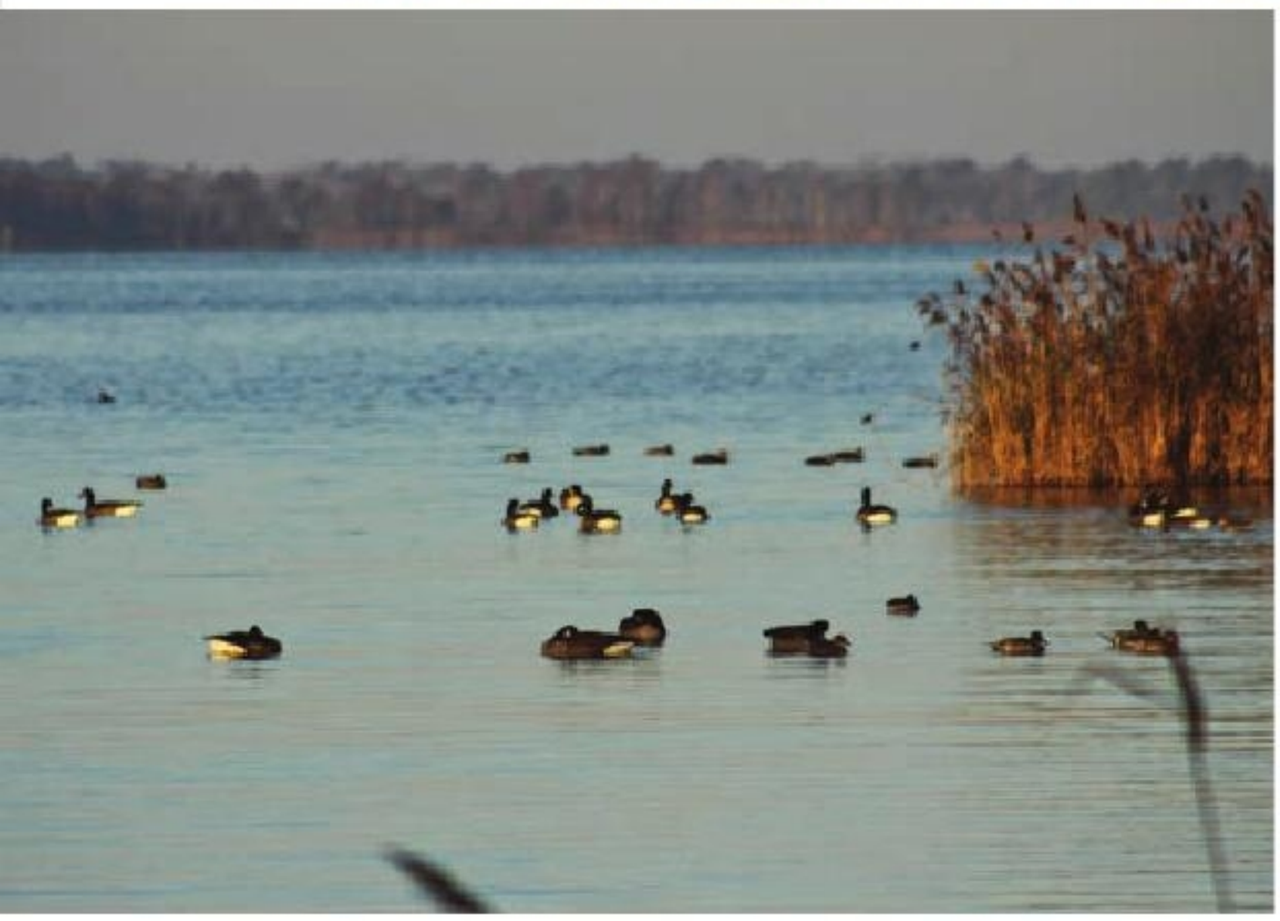
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LYDIA MCGHEE

By Virginia Holman

The more time I spend in the natural world, the more important protecting it becomes to me. Nowadays, when people discover something splendid, whether it's a new restaurant or a nesting egret, the first impulse is to take a photo and share it with others. Yet in the current vernacular, to share something usually means you have posted it on social media. In this electronic space one has not a handful of friends with whom one shares her rich and complex life in true fellowship and intimacy, but rather friends whose primary gesture of connection is the repeated press of a small button. It should be obvious that such friendship and sharing means little at all. How much value is there in yet another selfie that you post to your 800 "friends"? Or a day's worth of "tweeting" to your "followers"? How many hours have you spent reading your "feed" instead of breaking bread with someone truly dear to you or arranging coffee with someone who might be in need of good cheer? And though it's wonderful to look at photos of majestic landscapes on your cellphone, has it replaced the pure, simple pleasure of stepping outside to feel the wind in your hair?

I have shunned social media for the past several years, but my husband uses Facebook, and now and again we'll post photos of trips and animals on his page. I wasn't concerned about this until last year, when the snowy owls arrived. Those who saw these dazzling, weary, hungry creatures shared their photos and posted the birds' GPS coordinates. Soon hordes of birders, wildlife photographers and curiosity seekers arrived, sometimes from hundreds of miles away. Far too often, throngs of people crowded around a single owl to the point of stress and harassment. It became alarmingly clear that sharing photos of these fragile creatures with one's social media friends can be fun for the human, but harmful to the animal. Wild animals are vibrant, sentient creatures whose world we inhabit and destroy with ease. Sharing photos and the location of an ibis rookery on social media simply isn't the same as posting the location of a restaurant. The restaurant will thrive with more visitors, but the rookery will collapse and fail if humans intrude.

We're lucky in North Carolina to have eight national wildlife refuge areas along our coast. If you love nature and wildlife, these refuges are ideal places to observe wildlife in an environment dedicated to conservation. They aim



to strike a balance between humans' desire to observe wildlife, and conservation of essential habitats. So, somewhat paradoxically, one of the best ways to help a wildlife refuge survive is to visit.

Writer Rachel Carson knew this well. Fifteen years before she authored *Silent Spring*, the book that is synonymous with the modern environmental movement, she was an editor and writer with what is now the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Some of her earliest published writing appeared between 1947–1950 in a series of government pamphlets with the decidedly bureaucratic title *Conservation in Action*. One pamphlet in the series focuses on North Carolina's remote wildlife refuge, Lake Mattamuskeet. Located about three hours from Wilmington, this 40,100-acre, three-foot-deep lake is not only the state's largest natural lake, it's also one of the most important overwintering spots for migratory birds on the Atlantic Flyway. Carson loved the lake for its wildness and its stunning displays of waterfowl, and she returned many times during her too short life. Rachel Carson not only shared this splendid lake with her readers, but also through letters with her dear friend Dorothy Freeman.

"Somewhere in my own little notebooks there is a record of those morning waterfowl flights as I observed them several years ago — Fall of '56 it must have been. . . . During the evening and — I seem to remember — even far into the night, the throbbing chorus of their voices rose from the lake where they were resting. But the greatest thrill came when we went out just before sunrise to watch the flocks rising up and heading out into the neighboring fields where they forage by day. They would pass literally just over our heads — so low the sunshine made their dark heads and necks look like brown velvet, and all the while the sky filled with their music."

In another letter, she wrote to Freeman that what she cherished most about Lake Mattamuskeet was "the constant, haunting music of the geese." (From *Always, Rachel: The Letters of Rachel Carson and Dorothy Freeman*, edited by Martha Freeman.)

A visit to Lake Mattamuskeet during the winter months reveals that it is still very much the lake that Rachel Carson loved. Yet this national treasure was once slated for destruction. At the turn of the twentieth century, efforts were under way to drain our state's largest natural lake for farmland. Workers dug miles of canals and erected an enormous pumping station with a 120-foot smokestack. The pumping plant was the largest in the world at that time and was widely considered a marvel of engineering. Three separate companies tried and failed to tame Lake Mattamuskeet. The old pumping station with its red and white striped smokestack and a series of canals are the most visible remnants of that quixotic battle with nature.

Happily, man's failure has been wildlife's gain. In 1934, the federal government designated the area a national wildlife refuge. Each winter between November and February the refuge hosts approximately 30,000 tundra swans, 10,000 Canada geese, 5,000 snow geese, and twenty-two duck species. All told, the overwintering waterfowl population hovers around 100,000 birds. In addition, black bear, gray fox, bobcat, red wolf, osprey and bald eagles are regularly seen on the refuge. Human visitors to the lake number around 60,000 annually. Most visitors come to view wildlife, participate in controlled

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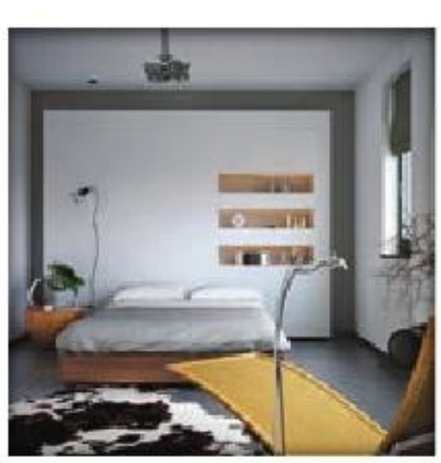

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hunts, and fish. Because the area is so large (the entire refuge is over 50,000 acres) it's possible to bird the trails and edges of the lake without ever encountering other humans.

The refuge has a number of long dirt roads punctuated by wooden overlooks. On warmer days, morning visitors may see black bears lumber from the woods to forage in the fields. I've visited Lake Mattamuskeet in spring, the fall, and in winter. Each season brings its unique pleasures. I've seen osprey and eagle nests in the spring. In the fall, I've been dazzled by thousands of dragonflies and serenaded by tree frogs and spring peepers as I drifted off to sleep. Yet no season can compete with the lake in winter, when it becomes the lake that Rachel Carson so loved. The most spectacular display occurs at sunrise and again at sunset when the tundra swans take wing. In a small pagoda overlooking the lake along the Charles Kuralt trail, you may watch as the gunmetal lake pinkens with the sky. When the swans rise from the fields, tens of thousands of white wings flash until the sky shimmers, until the light dims. Too soon the flock fades from sight and the cries fall silent, and all that's left is the slow white drift of a few feathers through the air like bits of ash, like flakes of snow.

Lake Mattamuskeet is one of the few places in the world you may view such a sight. So visit the lake this winter. Bring a friend — a true friend, one whose hand you can warm in your own — and make the trip to Rachel's lake.

Want to go?

On January 16, Wild Bird Garden will run a guided weekend trip to Lake Mattamuskeet. Visit www.wildbirdgardenincw.com/LakeMattamuskeetOuterbanksWeekend.html or call (910) 343-6001 to register.

Halyburton Park will also run a birding trip January 23 – 25. Call to register: (910) 341-0075.

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge
85 Mattamuskeet Road
Swan Quarter, North Carolina
(252) 926-4021
www.fws.gov/mattamuskeet/

Camping is available at Goose Creek State Park

2190 Camp Leach Road, Washington, North Carolina, (252) 923-2191, goose.creek@ncparks.gov

Year-round lake lodging is available at Carawan's Motel and Cabins

510 NC Highway 94, Swan Quarter, North Carolina, Phone: (252) 926-5861
www.carawans.com/mattamuskeet_retreat.html

Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.

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January 2015

"To dig for treasures shows not only impatience and greed, but lack of faith. Patience, patience, patience, is what the sea teaches. Patience and faith. One should lie empty, open, choiceless as a beach – waiting for a gift from the sea."

– Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Gift from the Sea

Sixty years ago, Anne Morrow Lindbergh published a little book of reflections that grew out of a brief vacation in a cottage alone on Captiva Island, Florida – a meditation on youth and age, love and marriage, friendship, solitude, and one's personal search for peace and contentment. Ostensibly a narrative constructed around the natural beauty of seashells, Lindbergh's soulful reflections spoke to a generation of American readers who found the metaphor of simple shells washed up on a beach – gifts from the sea – a gateway to personal transformation. The book has been a perennial bestseller ever since.

For many of us who've come here from other places, the sea both beckons and soothes, endlessly fascinates and surprises – and often heals and transforms in ways both large and small. As a new year breaks on the Eastern horizon, we are pleased to share five very different stories of personal transformation, gifts from the sea we believe enrich all of us.

Summoned to the Sea Within

. . . and a place somewhere between the Atlantic Ocean and the cape Fear River

By Jennifer Chapis

Before I moved from New York City to the Carolina coast, relaxation meant listening to the symphonic roar of Third Avenue traffic. The sound of dozens of tires swooshing reminded me of ocean waves. And imagining the expansive stretch of horizon — where ocean met sky — cleared my congested mind. Not unlike how my elevated loft bed created floor space in my 500-square-foot Upper East Side apartment, visualization was an alternative approach with magical results. This multi-tasking New Yorker drifted to sleep by envisioning herself floating on a raft at sea.

A city girl who, rather than sitting down for dinner, typically inhaled a slice of pizza while speed-walking to the subway, I was so busy I wished there were three of me — wished, at the very least, that I could turn twenty-four hours into thirty. By day I pressured myself to excel at work. By night I hit up poetry readings, dance performances, and concerts across five boroughs. But come bedtime, as the foam earplugs gradually expanded in my ear canal and the sirens and car horns ceased, my mind stopped its relentless race toward a finish line that never arrived. My meditation transported me to a delightfully watery place without deadlines. I closed my eyes, and imagined myself a mermaid propelled through salt water with a single flip of my phosphorescent tail. I discovered freedom.

Imagine a sublime state of consciousness where there's nothing but you and the color blue as you drift in utter awareness. Without lifting head from pillow, I accomplished something more important than I'd achieved all day. Absolute peace. Meditation was my secret to sleeping in the city that's too excited to slumber.

Where it had once been a thrill to rush to the Mercury Lounge to catch a show after work, it eventually became more fun to stay home with the ecstasy of my own inhale. Focused breathing was healthier and less expensive than downing pints of Brooklyn Lager. Besides, at the close of my hectic day, I wanted to unwind my mind, not numb it. I wanted to listen to my inner knowing, not injure my hearing with deafening acoustics. I wanted to dive below my surface level routine, swim beneath my fear of not having what I needed to be happy. I wanted to just be.

Once when I was completely relaxed — in the space between wakefulness and sleep — I heard an echoic sound like a muffled laugh into an air horn. Then, in my mind's eye, I saw huge stretches of gray grooved skin expanding, and realized . . . I was facing the throat of a humpback whale! But I didn't actively imagine it this time. It was just there, the giant eye like an opalescent marble staring back at me. I saw my reflection in its spherical mirror: My own eyes were puffy, my usually thick hair so thin I could see through it. I felt the sea calling from deep inside me, begging me to acknowledge the truth: Even without nightlife, I was still exhausted. No more working seven days a week from early morning until late evening, the whale's irrefutable image seemed to propose. I felt a calling to change my life.

When you think of spiritual awakening, you may picture Asheville's surreal blue mountains or perhaps a dip in the Ganges, but my sleepy soul woke up somewhere between Carolina Beach and the Cape Fear River. Originally, I'd come for a summer getaway, but once I arrived I didn't want to leave. It was more than the oxygen-absorbing negative ions, the tide lulling my brain waves, and the endorphin-stimulating sunshine. The vibration of this Southeast seaside scene was downright different. I'd lived in beach towns with powerful spiritual energy before: Lahaina, Hawaii, home of a 12-foot-tall copper Buddha; and near Encinitas, California, the yoga mecca of America. Although I had enjoyed New York's thrills and the West Coast's chill vibe, I'd felt hungry in the Big Apple and bored on the Pacific. The energy wasn't right for me.

In New York, meditation was not my spiritual practice; it was my survival. Gradually, it led me to slow down. I unexpectedly opened a door to the inexhaustible sea within me. I realized that Wilmington, North Carolina, a port city surrounded by water, was my home.

Starting a new life included leaving my husband, who I loved. For twelve years, I had accused him of not feeling his feelings and of not expressing himself to me. I didn't realize I was swallowing my emotions too. I'd thought my heart was open, but part of the reason we grew apart is because I was too busy to feel.

I later learned that when a whale visits you in your dreams, it's come to help you navigate emotional depths and communicate deeper awareness without being consumed by emotional overflows.

That summer, standing in the waves at Wrightsville Beach, I decided to release every muscle in my body. Instead of diving, swimming or standing firm against the current, I let it drag me down, scraping my knees against the sand, the water shooting up my nose and over my head. I stood up, and suddenly felt what I'd been afraid to feel. I felt my love like a flash flood. I remembered that my ex-husband used to ask me to sit down and eat healthy meals he'd cooked, and he acted angry when I was late to the table. I saw how much he loved me, even though he didn't show it in the way I'd wanted. I saw how successful I was, despite my marriage ending and changing careers at age 40. The waves knocked me down again. I stood up again and caught my breath. Tears streamed as I realized: The great sea flows in and out effortlessly. Be like the sea, I thought. Let go.

My first time playing in the water alone, and my heart opened wide enough to fit the entire ocean inside. I stood still, and watched the water recede. Shivering in the sunshine with knees bleeding, I felt more relaxed yet wide awake than I'd ever been. Already inside me breathed the bounty I'd always wanted.

The Early One Out

On dawn patrol at the beach, Donna Millis finds her endless horizon

Story and Photograhs by Mark Holmberg

There are those who are drawn to the seashore.

Then there are those who simply must be there.

That's Donna Millis. You'll find her walking the edge of Wrightsville Beach virtually every morning as dawn breaks.

"I love seeing the horizon, letting your mind go as far as you can. It's been one of my quests in life."

Donna has been seeing the horizon here since she moved beside the island nine years ago. For much of her 73 years, she did her dawn patrol on Newport Beach in Southern California.

There was the one dark, horizonless window of her life when she lived with her furniture-designer son in High Point, North Carolina.

"Oh my gosh, I could not see where I was," she recalled.

This one-time airline hostess loves the feel of the beach as dawn breaks.

"It always feels like it's my beach. I find myself singing to myself when no one else is around."

She's been there in the snow, in fog so thick she had to draw a line in the sand to keep from getting lost on Shell Island.

"I love the sounds of everything on the beach. When the water gets into the shells and makes that tinkling noise. The roar of the waves . . ."

The walks give her little epiphanies, like how people are like the shells that wash up on the beach.

"They all have imperfections . . . You see a crowd of people and only one sticks out."

Donna is like that. She has a calmness borrowed from her ocean horizons that sticks out.

"A free spirit – warm, cozy, fuzzy," said Bobbie Edwards, co-owner of the uncanny The Plant Place, as a group of friends gathered at Causeway Café for their usual Tuesday breakfast.

Donna is quiet, a good listener. It's one of the gifts her daily dawn patrol has given her, along with nearly perfect health, youth (73 years young!), wisdom and a sweet bounty of shells that she finds as the early one out.

Over the decades, she has become adept at arranging those shells into jewelry boxes, crosses and stand-alone pieces of beach art. That's how she shares what the horizon brings each day.

Mostly, she said, "I give them away."

King of the Sea

Wave dancing by heart

Story and Photograph by Mark Holmberg

Every day is like a gift for 60-year-old Ed King, and he likes to spend as many of them on or in the water as possible.

"It's always a destination," he said on a cold, windy, wetsuit day on the south end of Wrightsville Beach. "I'm always ready to get there."

He was there with his surfer son, Sonny, but Ed's longtime bum knee keeps him prone on his boogie board. He believes he was the first one to ride one at Wrightsville Beach back in 1974.

"It came in the mail in pieces," he recalled after his session in the emerald surf. "It had mimeographed directions on how to put it together. My first time in the lineup, the lifeguard pulled me out of the water and said, 'What's that?'"

His heart doctor has a similar reaction to his boogie board and Ed's frequent pulse-pounding, wave-dancing sessions.

"I stay aggravated with my cardiologist," he said.

Ed has cardiac arrhythmia — a pretty serious case. The kind of thing that might make you think twice about embracing heavy surf and currents fifty yards offshore, a long way from help.

But there he is. And he'll keep coming, donning swim fins so he can knife seal-like through the Atlantic.

Humans Ed's age are composed of about 60 percent water. (Babies are about 78 percent.)

But Ed is pretty much all about the sea. He says the "coastal lifestyle" calls to him. It's in his blood — his heart.

This Navy veteran works as a mate on a dredge boat. He's a wooden boat owner. So he's frequently on the water, or in it.

"You can see the majesty in it," Ed said. "I can always see something that surprises me. It's always a good thing."

The Breath of Life

The heart-wrenching gift of new lungs and a healing connection to the sea

By Nan Graham

Our firstborn, Howell, was born thirty miles from the salty Gulf of Mexico in Tallahassee, Florida, a stone's throw from Panacea, an intriguing name for a small Florida coastal town. So the proximity of the sea, or Gulf, in this case, was always there for our boy. Born under the sign of the fish, Pisces, son of a career Marine, grandson of a Marine who was in World War I and World War II, Howell seemed destined for a mystic connection to the sea, that amniotic fluid of the Earth.

By the spring of his second year, we had settled into life at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, out at Courthouse Bay on the New River. Topsail Beach was a quick drive and we spent long summer weekends there with our toddler running on the sand and chasing the waves in the surf. We had just learned that Howell had cystic fibrosis. I watched my beautiful boy gain his footing in the sand and laugh delightedly at the seagulls. Squidging the wet sand between his baby toes made him squeal with joy. I was angry at the doctors. And at God. It was so unfair. Howell was thriving . . . or so we thought. We were devastated.

Earlier, the doctor assured us that he could not possibly have the genetic disease. "Well, I can only tell you that this child has not 'failed to thrive,' the usual tip-off that something is seriously wrong," he said. "I think you might read too much." Despite the pediatrician's confidence that Howell was perfectly fine, we had insisted on a diagnostic test. The result confirmed our worst nightmare.

"He won't make it to first grade. Get a camera. Take lots of pictures," the doctor predicted after his reading of the test that revealed the life-threatening disease that clogs the lungs with fatal mucus. Fighting off infection becomes the primary concern. Breathing for the patient becomes a conscious chore.

With each new prediction, a sense of foreboding: a constant undercurrent in our lives. The sword of Damocles, from that proverbial fable about the courtier who wished he could trade places with the king, came to mind. When Damocles was granted his wish, he realized he sat in royal luxury but with a dangling sword above his neck, suspended only by a single horsehair. When Damocles protested that it was unfair, the king replied, "But life is just that precarious." He was right.

"Well, the teen years are the most we can hope for," we were told ten years later. When Howell was a teen, "The best expectation will be young adulthood," was the forecast. After that, no one dared predict anything. Howell had beaten the odds with every prediction.

We lived in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, across the Cooper River from Charleston, for almost ten years. And a ten-minute ride to the beach. It is the place of our children's childhood memories. A baby girl, Molly, two years younger than Howell and mercifully free of the genetic disease, completed our family. Salt water Shem Creek was practically at our back door. Good crabbing and fishing there. Howell was on the swim team and played Little League baseball. The neighborhood boys were hell-on-their-bicycle-wheels.

Howell learned to sail on our 30-foot Pearson sailboat and became an expert sailor at a young age. My husband, who grew up sailing in Morehead City with his abundance of cousins, said that sailing was one sport Howell could excel in, and excel he did. Our son learned to navigate the Charleston Harbor, sail past Fort Sumter and even beyond into the Atlantic on his own with his buddies. His favorite book: *Dove*, a real life story of 16-year-old Robin Graham, who sailed around the world . . . alone. We were rarely out of sight or sound of the ocean or a salt marsh for a decade.

We had noticed that whenever we were near the ocean — on vacation or living in a coastal area — Howell was noticeably better. Fewer lung, sinus infections and bouts with flu. He breathed easier. Inland living was a different story. Recurrent infections and hospitalizations were frequent away from salt water. We mentioned our observation to several pediatricians, but they pooh-poohed the idea. Purely anecdotal, they intoned.

UNCW was his first choice for college . . . it was near his beloved ocean. By the time Howell had graduated from UNCW and gotten his real estate license, his stamina was waning. The only hope was a new procedure at UNC Memorial Hospital at Chapel Hill. A double lung transplant. Howell's new lungs were a heart-wrenching gift that came from a doctor whose son had been in a motorcycle wreck. From Pensacola, Florida. On the Gulf of Mexico. Another young man raised by the salt water's edge.

On October 8, 1990, after thirteen hours in surgery for the transplant operation, Howell said he took a real breath for the first time in his life. As he says, "Struggling to breathe is difficult to understand . . . until you've been there." Wickedly funny, Howell says he knew he was OK in the recovery room when he realized through the anesthesia haze that his pretty brunette nurse had been replaced by a burly male nurse. Rehab in the ward was extensive and started ten minutes after he left the recovery room, walking determinedly down the hall, pushing IV poles and machines, but he never flagged.

Home by Christmas, Howell's recovery continued in Wilmington. These are his words:

Only months after we got home from the transplant surgery, I took the Boston Whaler I had at that time out into the ocean . . . it was the perfect day but extremely windy and rough. But it soon became too warm for my shirt, which I pulled off. Still too warm. I stood and dived into the ocean and realized as I was surfacing that I had made a strategic error. The boat had caught the wind in the Bimini top and the current swiftly moved it out of reach. I tried to swim after it but it quickly glided away from me parallel to the beach. I knew not to panic. I treaded water for over an hour. I was four miles out from the beach and could not even see land. The Whaler was long out of sight by now. My only thought was that Dr. Egan was going to kill me for wasting my new lungs by sinking to the bottom of the ocean.

I heard something slapping across the waves. I saw a guy on a windsurfer sailing some fifty yards away. I yelled for help, but he could not see me due to the three- to four-foot waves. I yelled again and saw him heading toward me. He pulled me aboard and we headed back to shore. I seem to be beating the odds again. My boat was retrieved some three miles distance down the beach at Figure Eight Island.

I didn't tell my parents about this incident for months. When I finally did, there was a long silence.

My mother declared: "Dr. Egan would have killed you?! Are you kidding? He would have had to stand in line behind your daddy and me! Dr. Egan only worked thirteen hours. Your father and I worked twenty-eight years to get you to this point."

Howell and his beautiful wife, Debbie, still live in his beloved Wilmington. Now a partner in a real estate appraisal firm, an English Lab named Bristol, and a 23-foot Scout boat named *Nine Lives II* to explore the marshes, waterway and ocean complete his life.

"They say I am the longest surviving double lung transplant recipient in the world . . . it's amazing! And my boat named *Nine Lives II*? I still have the boat and I think I still have a few of those lives left. I thank God for getting me this far," says Howell.

And I thank God for my the miracle gift from the sea . . . the salt air that helps every CF patient, and his family, breathe easier.

Doctors today acknowledge that salt water and salt air are beneficial to cystic fibrosis patients. Learn more through Pipeline to a Cure, an annual Cystic Fibrosis Foundation benefit gala based in Wilmington that celebrates the connection between surfing and CF. Info: www.pipelinetoacureeast.org.

The University of Carolina Beach

The remarkable Burnett family has long been drawn to the ocean – and learned valuable life lessons from it

By Susan Hance

Summer, 1931. Six-year-old Gilbert Burnett is running down the beach at lung-splitting speed, sand shooting from under his bare feet. He is chasing a winged machine as it taxies north on packed sand at low tide, but he has no knowledge of aerodynamics. Pilot Warren Pennington turns his open cockpit, tail-dragger biplane 180 degrees and heads south into the wind. From his raised cockpit, he doesn't see the boy running toward him. Gilbert does an about-face and runs Forrest Gump-style in the opposite direction. As the airplane gains on him, something in his brain clicks. Turn right into the soft sand. He won't take the plane into soft sand. The airplane breezes past the boy into the Carolina sky, and a seed is planted. Gilbert will eventually learn to pilot an airplane himself.

On a recent bright day, 89-year-old Gilbert Burnett and two of his eight siblings gathered at their family beach cottage and recalled the events and experiences that shaped their lives. Their memories of growing up at Carolina Beach through the Great Depression and World War II are as sharp as ever. For Gilbert, the cottage and its surroundings — surf, sand, and a variety of people — were the backdrop for some of the most important lessons he ever learned. His siblings quite agree.

"I learned about hard core reality, and life, dealing with people here at Carolina Beach," said Gilbert Burnett, now a retired chief judge of the Fifth Judicial District. "It impacted my life positively in many ways. I called it UCB, the University of Carolina Beach."

The Burnett family has always been drawn to the ocean, he explains. His grandfather, William Henry Burnett, was a cowboy after the Civil War, keeping free range cattle near Fort Fisher, about where the aquarium is now. In those days, the house and its grounds were fenced to keep cattle out. Later, laws required people to fence cattle in. And so Gilbert makes the distinction between "cowboy" and "cattle farmer."

Gilbert's parents, John Henry and Ruth Deaton Burnett, made their home in Burgaw, but there was sand in John Henry's heart and soul and shoes. In 1926, John Henry bought ten lots at Carolina Beach, three of them oceanfront. Early on, the Burnetts brought their family to the beach every weekend and rented a cottage for two weeks every summer. Their children — Annetta, Ruth, John Martin, Gilbert, Susie, Mary Elizabeth, Julian, Sylvia and Phyllis — made the trek year after year.

In 1936, John Henry Burnett was able to build his dream cottage on Carolina Beach for $2,300. When it was knocked to its knees by Hurricane Hazel in 1954, there was no question about rebuilding. He instructed the contractors to use every viable scrap of material from the demolished cottage for reconstruction. His beloved cottage rose again in 1955 with a price tag of $12,000, its essence preserved in the old materials.

A packed family calendar on the refrigerator is proof that the historic cottage remains well-used. Warm wood panels retrieved from the original cottage cover the walls, ceiling and floors. A large table with bench seating beckons old and young. Photos lure visitors up the stairs to six spacious bedrooms filled with years of history and décor chosen by its inhabitants. Comfortable furniture waits on the porch in the salty air.

Decades of laughter seem to linger in this space. If only the cottage could whisper long-lost tales — but no need. When the family gathers here, stories begin to fly.

Once the cottage was built, the family packed up the four-door Chevy on the last day of school and moved from their modest, one-story home in Burgaw to the beach, where summer stretched out before them like a runway, its ending marked by school's beginning again.

"The car was packed so full the kids were looking down on the street, the dog was panting in our ears, and there was always the sewing machine. Mother took the sewing machine everywhere," said Julian Burnett, retired Housing Authority Director of the Section 8 Program.

"When we got there, Mother would make the speech," said Sylvia Burnett Crippen, owner of Mrs. Crippen's Fruitcake company. "'If any one of you goes to the water without telling us, we will pack up and go home.' She always did what she said, so we knew it would happen . . . and we had to come in between 11 and 2 because of the UV rays. Daddy said."

While the children found time to roam, their father was on a working vacation before there was such a thing. John Henry Burnett was an attorney with the U.S. Treasury, settling large estates such as those of Duke and R.J. Reynolds. He had a home office in Burgaw and continued that practice in the cottage, donning a coat, tie, and clean white shirt each morning. Then, like a sea turtle tucking into its shell, he retreated into a windowed front room to tend his profession. Occasionally coming out to scan the strand or put eyes on the children, he lived the work ethic he wanted his children to learn.

"He was a loyal, brilliant, amazing person," recalls Gilbert Burnett.

With no houses on the Myrtle Grove Sound side, the children had the

run of the land from the sound to the beach. Time was measured by the tides, and boating and fishing were as much a part of their lives as salt and sand. They learned how to fish from a family of experts.

The children watched as the Freeman family came to Carolina Beach, pulled the boat out of the back of the pickup truck, and got to work. Someone in the back of the boat rolled out a seine, a vertical fishing net that was dragged in the water. Tourists and residents quickly fell in to help. They set the seine to embrace a school of migrating mullet, making a U-shaped dragnet. Soon, pounds of mullet filled the net.

Being children of an attorney, the Burnetts knew the law. Once the fish were in the seine, they belonged to the Freemans. But mullet are good jumpers and as they pulled the net onshore, some jumped out — they were fair game.

"We'd have popeye mullet that night," said Julian Burnett, who continues to be a renowned surf fisherman, according to his siblings. "Some called them September mullet because that's when they started to run."

The Freemans also fished for black bass, laced them together with stringed beach yucca plants, and cleaned them as the boat puttered toward the beach. Onshore the fish sold for 25 cents: two large, three medium, or four small ones.

And shellfish were there for the taking. In those days before Canal Drive or Snows Cut existed, the water was clear enough to see crabs scampering on the sandy bottom. With fish heads for bait, youngsters captured the bushel of crabs needed for their family. And they learned.

"Daddy taught us which were females and males," said Sylvia Burnett Crippen.

Life was good on Carolina Beach, but the Great Depression did not pass them by.

"We lived like poor people really," said Gilbert Burnett. "Daddy grew up poor."

When he started a family, John Henry vowed never to be poor again. So he practiced law and invested in land on the beach and river, to the long-lasting benefit of his family. He also invested in his children's life lessons, especially those involving responsibility. When the family arrived at the summer cottage, it was the boys' responsibility to help replace loose pilings, paint the trim, and complete other repairs. Carolina Beach in those days also offered opportunity.

"You met people from all over," said Gilbert. "It was an education in reality. We all worked at one time or another. In the Depression, kids like me were a dime a dozen."

Gilbert got a job selling popcorn in the seaside carnival at age 12 and learned the art of commerce. Mr. Mansfield owned the business and his foreman checked the bags at the end of the day. "If I was under, he took it out of my pay; if I was over he kept it," said Gilbert.

Mansfield walked every evening in a white shirt, white shoes, and white hat with a black band. Gilbert approached him about the pay inequity, but he did nothing. So Gilbert borrowed money from his father and bought half-interest in the snowball stand of a competitor.

Mansfield put up a stand across from Gilbert's new business, and in an attempt to kill the competition, gave away the chipped ice balls covered with sweet flavored syrup. Not to be outdone, Gilbert gave two girls a snowball each afternoon and sent them in opposite directions on the beach, telling everyone that "Gil's were the best on the beach." The lesson in marketing served them well and business continued, with his mother helping make the syrup and his siblings helping out in the business.

Young Julian and Sylvia made a business of gathering cattails growing in the sound, dipping them in red, white and blue paint, and then selling them door to door. Expectations were different for girls. John Henry didn't want his daughter in the regular work force until she was 19 and had a year of college.

Fun filled the spaces between work and daily routines, forming a treasure trove of beach memories. Sylvia often asked her mother if they could sleep in their swimsuits, all set to go in the morning. And Gilbert learned lifeguarding from Hannah Block, one of the first female lifeguards in the area. In 1939, a new pleasure arrived: Britt's Donuts. After a treat, it was back to the sand.

"We'd jump off the roof of the house onto the dunes," recalled Julian. "The dunes have been washed away and returned many times."

And their parents were always close by. "Our mother was absolutely sensational," said Sylvia.

Her creative ideas entertained everyone. She let them paint the porch furniture, make shell necklaces, and when it rained, she created a fort on the porch out of overturned rocking chairs covered with a blanket. Friends flocked to the cottage to visit, have a taffy pull, or a scavenger hunt.

"When visitors dropped by, mother would say, 'Guess what? You get to sleep on a pallet tonight!'" Sylvia said.

A favorite pastime for the girls was dancing at the Green Lantern or the Pavilion. But the rule was: Don't bring home hungry guys for lunch.

Downtown boardwalks enticed visitors with jump joints, bands and shoeblacks, but it was the spaces between the boards that attracted the younger crowd. Kids put chewing gum on a stick, heated it, and thrust it between the boards to nab a dropped coin. When the gum cooled, they pulled it up and pocketed some easy money.

Meanwhile, Ruth Burnett bought fresh produce from the vegetable man, had ice delivered for the ice box, sewed dresses, and prepared meals. The African-American woman who worked for them in Burgaw also worked for them at the beach and had a bedroom downstairs. In later years, college girls served that function, working during the day and having the nights off.

World War II found its way to Carolina Beach in the 1940s. Residents heard the blasts from U-boats offshore and maintained blackout with dark green shades covering the windows at night, recalled Julian.

"We actually caught a spy during the war," said Sylvia.

Like little elves coming out to work at night, the children played on the beach in the moonlight, or in the dark on unlit nights. One night they spotted a light down the beach. In "I'm telling" mode, they rushed inside to inform their parents that someone was using a light. Their father came onto the porch, witnessed the twinkle of dots and dashes from a window, and called the military police.

Two German spies, signaling from an upstairs window in the Carolina Inn, were soon apprehended.

When Gilbert answered the call to military service, he took to the air, learning to fly B25 aircraft. His training and the war ended about the same time, but he went on to fly civilian planes. The long-planted seed finally germinated.

Summer ended, the war ended, but the lessons never did.

After he started a family of his own, Gilbert owned a hosiery mill. One night lightning struck the mill and it burned to the ground. Devastated and uncertain about his future, Gilbert went to the cottage and began building a boat. And as he worked, he thought. He decided to try law school, found he loved it, and went on to a long legal career. Adversity led him to a window of opportunity.

Again Burnett Cottage had nurtured him while he gained a new understanding of the family motto: *Virescit vulnere virtus*. When you are wounded, you become stronger.

Sharing Old Christmas

At the annual Twelfth Night Banquet of Kathy and Chris Wilson, guests are treated like kings from afar

In the double parlor, paperwhite bulbs adorn the hearth and Christingles at each place setting symbolize Christ as the light of the world.

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by James Stefiuk

Last year, local preservationists Kathy and J. Chris Wilson invited us to their annual Twelfth Night Banquet at Tuscany, the 6,000-square-foot 1854 Italianate mansion on Fifth Avenue as featured in the August 2013 issue of *Salt* magazine. Otherwise known as Old Christmas, the eve of Epiphany marks the end of the Christmas season and commemorates the arrival of the three kings who honored the Infant Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

This day of merrymaking and reverie, January 5, also happens to be Kathy's birthday.

The greatest gift, says Kathy, is to be in the company of her dearest friends while preserving a holiday that she and Chris hold sacred.

In order to create enough space to seat nearly thirty guests at the same table, the Wilsons had to do some major rearranging. The table itself is an assemblage of eighteenth and nineteenth century dining tables combined to achieve the desired size. What is typically an exquisite and architecturally grandiose double parlor was transformed into a formal dining room spacious enough to accommodate everyone.

After "proper" mint juleps, served promptly at 6 p.m., 20-year-old Singleton Wilson dazzled guests with an operatic performance of a 1786 Italian love poem and Gershwin's "Someone to Watch Over Me" — a gift for her mother. Next, all joined hands for a Moravian blessing, followed by a three-course dinner.

Those who know Kathy know that little brings her as much joy as lovingly preparing food for others. The menu: stuffed chicken medallion with tomato aspic; serve-yourself shrimp and grits with various toppings; and, of course, traditional king's cake with royal icing. The consensus: ineffable.

As seems true of most jovial and long-anticipated occasions, the evening passed by in a flash. These snapshots capture a few of those fleeting moments — a reminder that the greatest gifts are never purchased but freely given.

GRITS

TABASCO

Before the king cake is served, Kathy and Chris Wilson graciously thank their guests for "re-enacting the coming of the Magi." The real gift, says Kathy, is to share their annual tradition with their dearest friends.

Tradition holds that the king cake is served to draw the kings (the Magi) to the Epiphany, much like, says Chris, the star that led the three wise men to the manger.

STORY OF A HOUSE

A Life Transformed

How the "old girl" on the water got a second chance

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Sometimes, whether orchestrated by destiny or a product of pure luck, the universe provides us with exactly what we need, even and perhaps especially when we don't see it coming.

So it was for a weather-worn cottage in Wrightsville Beach and, come to think of it, for the woman who vowed to save it.

But this isn't just a story of the house. It's the story of a life made new. Moreover, it's a perfect illustration of the transformative power of love.

From a swanky second-floor lounge overlooking Mott's Channel, our heroine, a sylphlike young mother with piercing green eyes, recalls the first time she saw the dated brick and wood-paneled cottage nestled alongside Sunset Park. It was a house you might notice from the water and imagine replacing with a newer, more modern dwelling. But when she looked upon it, the green-eyed beauty claims to have heard a distinct and indisputable cry for help. It was not the shrill cry of an anguished damsel. It was the protest of a steel magnolia obscured by a mid-century facade which, on the surface, rendered the old gal ordinary and, frankly, unremarkable.

Suffice it to say that the voice did not match the package. We aren't talking about a grand antebellum mansion with bracketed eaves and Palladian columns and a sweeping Southern porch. We're talking about a two-story 1962 beach cottage with a hip roof and a front door that required guests to walk through a dark carport to knock.

If the characters of this story seem familiar, it's because they are. The cottage, once beloved, was like a velveteen rabbit in a nursery full of shiny modern toys. And like the magic nursery fairy who made the toy rabbit real, the woman was able to see past the transient shell of the house to its very soul.

Unlike the shabby rabbit of childhood lore, however, the old house on the water never felt forgotten. She was for sale, though, and with that came uncertainty.

But since true love reveals inner beauty, to the house fairy, the plain-Jane cottage was already radiant. She just wanted the world to see it shine, too.

While she's not an actual fairy, our heroine, who wishes to remain unnamed, has a dainty frame and chestnut colored hair which, twisted back into a loose braid, does cause her to resemble an elfin spirit who is graceful yet strong and unafraid to hide her playful personality.

"I know that's a good old girl," she recalls thinking about the house. "She's been good for somebody, but she is screaming to make a transformation. It just immediately hit me that way."

Although the view from the inside was virtually unbeatable — floor-to-ceiling glass windows along the back wall created a massive screen through which the watery world passed by like a silent film — the otherwise unremarkable cottage did not excite this story's leading lad.

Enter dreamy sandy blond counterpart.

"We were set up on a blind date, dated for two years, and he proposed," says our heroine, whose impish grin suggests their own tale includes a fair amount of magic.

But back to the house.

Appliances were original, the interior was dated, and, despite the three spacious bedrooms, it was not what the newly engaged couple had in mind when they envisioned the place they would start a family. For their purposes, it might have been easier to level the house and start over, says the green-eyed lady, "but [our leading lad] was a boy in love and he saw the love I immediately had for this house."

Her meeting with the widowed Edith Patelos was further vindication that the house was something special.

Edith and Stanley "Pat" Patelos, third owners, bought the house together in 1983. Pat owned a nearby millwork operation and was something of a local legend, known for his homemade margaritas and larger-than-life personality. In his *Star News* obituary, which touches on his love of life on the water, he is said to have died in his beloved home. Afterward, his wife of fifty-four years lived here alone for the better part of a decade.

"In her eyes you could see that she didn't want to see this house go," says the house fairy as a great egret drifts along the grassy marsh in middle distance. "I looked at her and I said, 'I promise you, if you let us have this house, I will not tear your old girl down. I will only bring her into what she might want to be for our family.'"

They bought the house in 2010, retreated for their wedding, and returned.

"Little did I know that I had become pregnant on our honeymoon," says the lady with bright green eyes.

So when they arrived at the cottage as newlyweds, their very first night together in a house they could call their own, the old dame on the water became more than a future project. She became part of the family.

After the birth of their first son, our rescuers agreed it was time to renovate and allow the old gal step into her full potential.

From the water, the main thoroughfare between Banks Channel and the Intracoastal Waterway, locals identified the old Patelos house by its mid-century modern-looking sunroom and the white baby grand that sat in it.

Now she turns heads. Confederate jasmine adorns concrete columns, and the exterior architecture makes the house look like a new penny.

Inside, form and function are one. Pocket doors create transitional spaces to help make every inch of the 4,000-square-foot home functional. On the ground level, a 950-square-foot children's play area has 14-foot ceilings and glass sectional doors that open up to a synthetic turf yard and dock.

On the main (second) floor, modern furniture and a neutral palette place emphasis on what is and has always been the home's most compelling feature: the wide-open view to the channel.

The homeowners made it clear to the architect that they wanted to

preserve the essence of the original house while simultaneously bringing her into the new era. Kersting Architecture delivered, and with the help of True Builders LLC, created a new-and-improved, modern-day version of the house that had already become home to its young family.

"This house is about truly living on the water," says architect Michael Ross Kersting, whose team envisioned a contemporary exterior with materials, textures and colors inspired by Chris-Craft and Riva yachts. "To me, she is like an old boat made new."

Indeed, no matter where you sit — living room, sunroom or dining room — you can watch boats, paddle boarders and waterfowl. Even the view from the Wolf range is like looking through a cruise ship window.

"FEMA standards actually required us to lift the house five feet higher than it was," says Kersting, which means that view, spectacular from the start, is now even better.

Early into the the transformation process — during which the old house was lifted up, augmented, and given the architectural equivalent of head-to-toe cosmetic surgery — our young mother discovered she was pregnant with baby No. 2.

This house really is going to be put to the test, she told the architect.

Little by little, the old gal on the water began to resemble her bold yet sophisticated spirit from the inside out — so much so that the house fairy began calling her "The Transformer."

"We cut the roof of the existing two story house off, added a new master bedroom level, and turned all of the remaining flat roofs into outdoor decks and terraces," says Kersting.

Like the original second-floor sunroom, the couple's retreat (entire third

level) boasts sliding glass doors along the back wall; textures and colors were inspired by rocks and oyster shells.

Suede-covered walls in the movie room. Silk walls for the bedroom. And for the master bath, where an L-shaped double vanity takes center stage, an indoor/outdoor shower reminds the couple of their Anguilla honeymoon.

"I wanted it to feel like we were coming home upstairs to our own spa retreat," says the green-eyed lady.

It does.

But the heart of the house is still downstairs.

Though gutted and revamped, the layout of the main floor was virtually unchanged, preserving the memories created by a young family. In the firstborn's room, for instance, where mother and father rocked baby to sleep, a piece of original framework displays tiny notches that track the toddlers' heights.

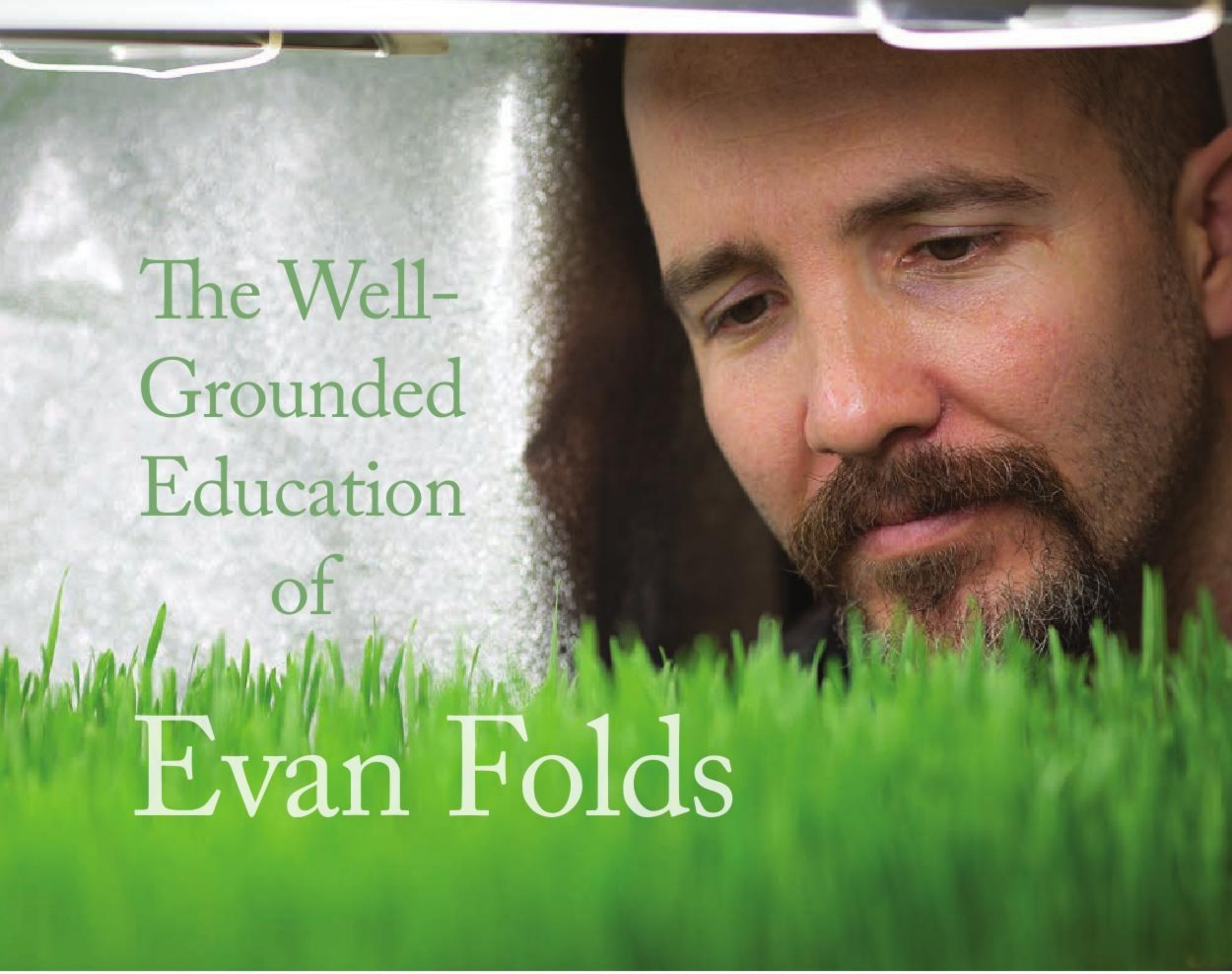
"The stairwell is located centrally and rises from the ground to the highest part of the roof," says the architect. When the sun hits clerestory windows, a crystal chandelier casts prisms of light down the stairwell and into the nursery.

An aging but spry Edith Patelos came to see her former home last year.

"She was so proud of it," says the house fairy, who was able to keep her promise to the home's previous owner.

And one look at the house will tell you that the old cottage is proud, too.

"I know you're not supposed to be attached to bricks and mortar," says our house fairy. "Your home is where your heart and family are, period. But if we are blessed enough to always be in this house, I want our boys to know that no matter where they are in this world, if they need to come home, come right here. We'll probably be sitting on the end of that dock."



The Well-Grounded Education of Evan Folds

The rise of Progressive Farms and an ancient idea whose time may have come – again

By Barbara J. Sullivan · Photographs by Mark Steelman

How many angels can dance on the head of a pin? Wrapping your head around that is a little bit like talking about biodynamic agriculture, how it works and whether there's a lot more about plant life than we can ever know from a purely cognitive point of view. The difference, however, is that with biodynamic agriculture, there's solid science to go along with the metaphysical speculation.

We know, for example, that one tablespoon of soil contains somewhere around fifty billion microbes, a little less than half the number of human beings who've ever lived on Earth. That's a humbling thought and one that's almost as hard to visualize as angels on pinheads, but if you had access to an expensive enough lens you could verify it for yourself. This diversity of micro life turns out to be the key to just about everything. If you understand healthy soil to be the foundation for diverse plant life and plants to be essential for the survival of animals, including humans, then those fifty billion microbes matter — as do the ten thousand or so species represented in that same tablespoon of soil.

Back at the turn of the twentieth century, the Austrian philosopher and architect Rudolf Steiner (the same man who created the Waldorf school movement) gave a series of now famous lectures on biodynamic agriculture in response to new problems farmers were experiencing with plant and animal diseases — problems caused by the recent introduction of chemical fertilizers. The gist of Steiner's message was holistic: The soil, the crops and the animals of any given farm constitute a single living system and should be treated as such. Steiner is considered by some to be the father of organic farming. He rejected man-made chemicals in favor of manures and natural composts and advocated planting according to an astrological calendar.

Although much of Steiner's agricultural message has become mainstream now, with entire industries devoted to organic farming products, his belief in supernatural and cosmic sources of plant growth may be a stretch for the average gardener. True believers in what Steiner called "scientism," a combination of science and religion, go to lengths to ensure crop success by engaging in esoteric practices such as the burial of stag bladders stuffed with dried yarrow, cattle horns stuffed with manure or cow skulls filled with oak bark. These are buried over the winter and unearthed six months later around Ascension Day, their contents used in compost teas and other organic fertilizers. The idea is that these practices channel unseen spiritual forces beneficial to plant success.

Almost a hundred years after Steiner gave his famous agricultural talks, an energetic young college graduate named Evan Folds bumped into his message through a friend of a friend and began what became a life-changing career path. Folds, who grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina, and majored in biology and religion at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, was going through a post-graduate journey of exploration when he met Stephen Storch, a Long Island farmer who was practicing biodynamic agriculture with excellent results. Following the principles set out by Steiner, Storch used manures and composts from his livestock, combined with other organic elements like crushed eggshells and oyster shells, to enrich the soil and feed the crops. These, in turn, supplied food for the humans and healthy fodder for the animals in a virtuous cycle. Because the land had been farmed this way continuously over many generations, free from artificial fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides, the soil was rich in naturally occurring microorganisms. It contained the diversity of bacteria, protozoa, fungi and algae essential for plant health. As a result, the crops were vigorous and abundant.

Storch was also a believer in the more arcane aspects of biodynamic farming, including the animal intestine/dried flower burials and the beneficial powers of crystals such as amethysts and citrines, which he incorporated into his farm technology. Through the synchronicity of his meeting with Storch and reading Steiner's agriculture talks, Evan Folds realized that he had found his calling. In practical terms he knew that he wanted to bring part of Storch's biodynamic technology and know-how to his fledgling hydroponic garden enterprise in Wilmington, North Carolina. He was

especially intrigued by a homely contraption Storch had fashioned from an old pickle barrel and some PVC piping, what he called his "vortex brewer." In Storch's words, the swirling patterns of the water in the brewer were "indicative of the creative intelligence of the Universe." The resulting "imploded" water combined with various specially blended composts including fermented and aged organic materials produced a rich, murky liquid unlike any available elsewhere.

Folds saw the potential for the vortex brewer and reached an agreement with Storch to manufacture and distribute it — with an upgrade in appearance and all the necessary regulatory certificates — through his Wilmington company, Progressive Gardens. He's been selling the machine, in various sizes, to farmers, landscapers and large scale gardeners all across the U.S. ever since. From the positive feedback he got from customers, Folds became even more convinced that American agriculture, and especially American food production, was in need of this kind of good soil fix. Soil biodiversity was the foundation on which everything else should depend. Flavor, aroma, inborn pest and disease resistance, high yield: These were all natural by-products of what he saw as living versus dead soil. "Eating is an agricultural act," he says. "When food travels 1,500 miles to a plate it's empty. It's grown for the shelf and for profit, not for people."

Folds talks almost reverently about the kind of soil that is necessary to grow good food, and he's full of scientific particulars. For example, he'll tell you that the more biologically active the soil is, the more surface area it has and therefore the more negative binding sites are available to hold critical positive bonding elements. This is the soil's exchange capacity. "Organic gardening is feeding the microbes, but you have to have the microbes to start with." Feeding plants with man-made chemicals, he says, is like giving them fast food — they become obese and a favorite target for pests. The soil, in turn, becomes depleted.

Folds' vision as well as his business enterprise — centered on the vortex brewer and biodynamic soil products like compost teas — expanded over time. A new company, Progressive Farms, grew up side by side with Progressive Gardens, with an orientation not just to good, biologically diverse soil but to the best of what great soil can produce: good food. Progressive Farms is now in the food business from the level of the microbe all the way to the gourmet restaurant table. They offer a CSA (Community

Supported Agriculture) program where customers can pick up boxes of fresh, locally grown produce on a regular schedule. Using biodynamic methods, Progressive Farms grows vegetables, herbs and microgreens on a farm in Ivanhoe and on ten acres in the River Bluffs community in Castle Hayne. The River Bluffs site, overlooking a fifty foot bluff on the Cape Fear River, is part of the national trend toward "intentional agro-communities" where farms, local food restaurants and farmers markets are built into the developer's plans. This fits hand-in-glove with Folds' vision: good soil leading to good food leading to holistic nourishment for the body and soul. He quotes from Rudolf Steiner to explain, in part, what motivates him: "People no longer eat the food that allows them to carry their will into action."

Following up on this idea of an integrated food chain, Progressive Farms has reached out to customers to encourage them to participate on a more personal level. For example, an individual with a sunny patch of lawn might decide to become a Home Grower. Progressive Farms will set out a number of 15-gallon fabric garden beds with handles on them ("morsels") on the customer's lawn. A team member plants the morsels with basil and tends to them on a regular basis until they're ready to be harvested. Profits from the sale of the basil (much in demand by local restaurants) are divided between the Progressive Farms team and the Home Grower in a kind of reverse sharecropping.

Another option is to become a Home Farmer. After agreeing to abide by pesticide and herbicide-free policies and to work with biodynamic compost products to enliven the soil, the customer gets help from the company in farming the property, whatever its size. This help can extend anywhere from giving suggestions on where, what and how to plant, the best practices to use, how to create an edible landscape, to actually contracting out to do the farming. Depending on what crops are grown, Progressive Farms may offer to buy all the surplus vegetables the Home Farmer can't eat and sell them to its restaurant partners. How about adding some chickens or maybe a few beehives? No problem; they can make that happen.

If this catches on, Folds would like to expand to Raleigh and other cities. Maybe even nationally. He believes it's an idea whose time has come. In some ways, it's an idea as ancient as the Earth itself: letting all those billions of soil beings do what comes naturally while we do our best to step out of the way.

Barbara Sullivan is the author of Garden Perennials for the Coastal South. *Her downtown Wilmington garden has been featured on the PBS show* Garden Smart.

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ALMANAC

January

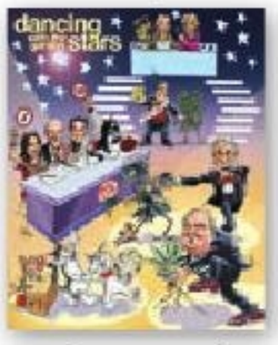
By Noah Salt

"To read a poem in January is as lovely as to go for a walk in June."

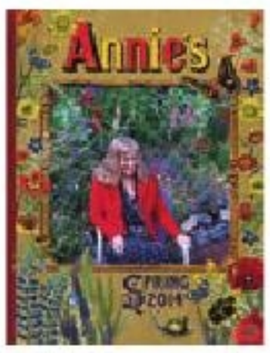
— Jean Paul Sartre, existentialist philosopher and guy-among-guys

Seeds for a Great Garden

As sure as the January snow flies in the upper 48, seed catalogs descend on America's mailboxes like a blizzard beginning in January. Ever anxious to be helpful, here's six of the of old Almanac Gardener's favorite — free — catalogs, which can be seen online but are always more fun to browse with a warm cup of something on a bleak midwinter day:



Plant Delights Nursery, plantsman extraordinaire Tony Avent's famously illustrated catalog of outstanding and unusual plants and hard to find seedlings, ideal for North Carolina's weather zones. www.plantdelights.com



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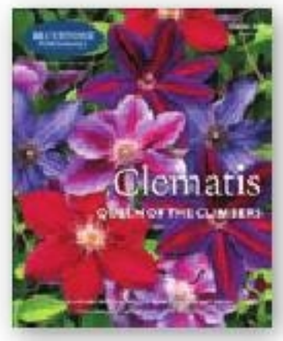
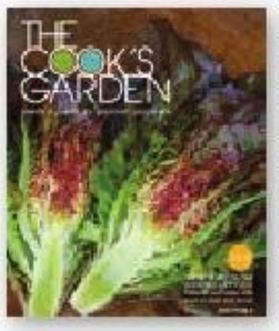


Bluestone Perennials, 1,200 fine quality perennials, shrubs and bulbs, a great planning resource. www.bluestoneperennials.com



The Cook's Garden, a great variety of seeds, plants, herbs, fruits, flowers and culinary supplies for the well-planted gourmet who loves to garden and vice versa. www.cooksgarden.com

Johnny's Selected Seeds. Outstanding organic and heirloom seeds and fine garden tools from one of our favorite suppliers. www.johnnyseeds.com

"Like two lovers who have become
lost in a winter blizzard
and find a cozy warm hut in the forest;
I now huddle everywhere with a friend.
God and I have built an immense
fire together;
We keep each other happy,
And warm."

— From *The Subject Tonight is Love,*
Sixty Wild and Sweet Poems of Hafiz,
translated by Daniel Ladinsky

Guide to a Bubbly New Year

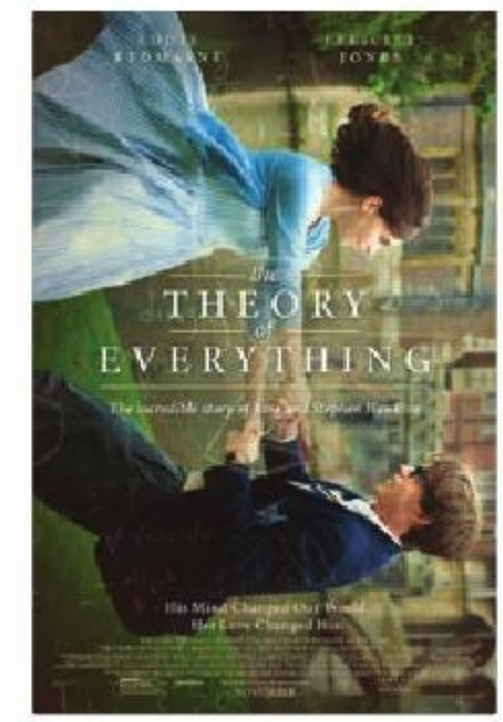
A dear old chum of the Almanac Gardener named Edith Hazard and her co-writer Wallace Pinfold published a dandy and dang near indispensable little book twenty years ago called *Rising to the Occasion* (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill) that's admirably still available via Amazon and other outlets. This charmingly practical guide book to the socially perplexed and occasionally confused proved especially popular as a Christmas or graduation gift to the younger socially delayed set, providing no-nonsense info on how to do everything from change a fuse to dance a waltz; make a great toast to build a good fire.

Herewith, a timely New Year sampling on how to open a good bottle of champagne: "Angle the bottle away from you (and any onlookers), grip the cork firmly with the towel or napkin, and begin to twist the cork. It should be a bit stiff. If the bottle has just come from the ice bath or fridge, it may be slippery. Again, the towel will help you get a grip. Twist the cork some more or turn the base of the bottle while holding on to the cork. Ease the cork out — not the cannon shot willfully produced by revelers less skilled than yourself — and then see a puff of carbonated white smoke, followed in even shorter order, once you tilt the bottle, by a mass of delicious golden foam."

Bottoms up, Almanackers! To a prosperous New Year.

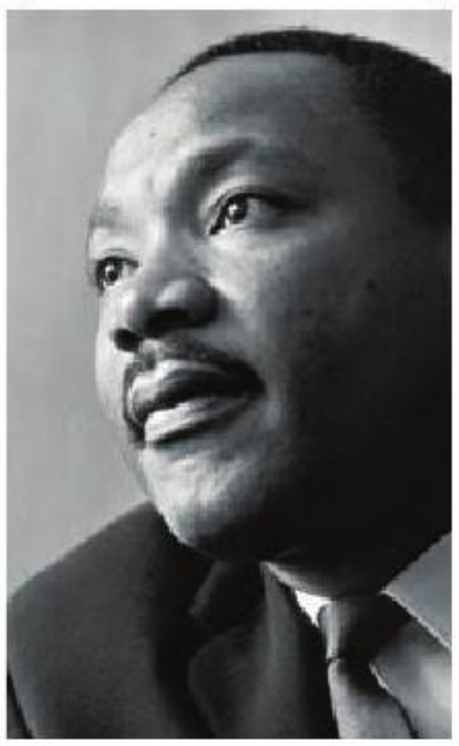
January 2015

Arts Calendar



Cinematique Film

1/5-7

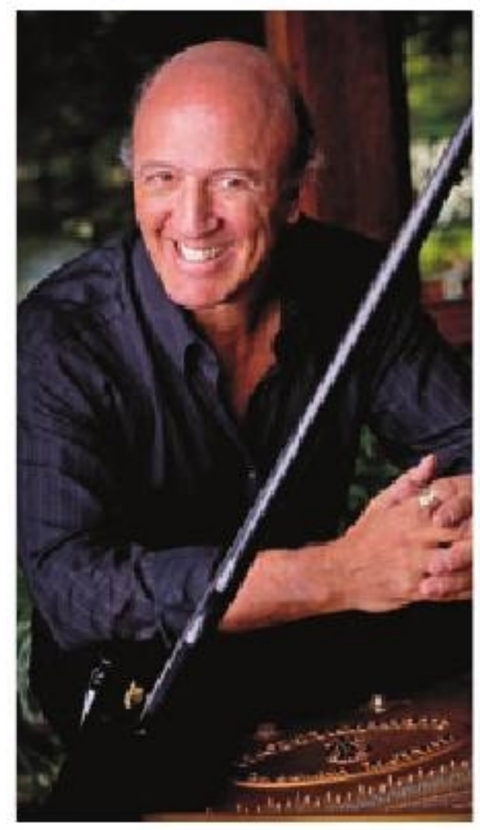


MLK Jr. Celebration

1/12-18

StriperFest

1/16-17



Emile Pandolfi Piano Concert

1/22

1/1 Toast the Coast

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. A coastal-themed party featuring crafts and ocean resolutions, noise-makers, kid parade and New Year's countdown followed by a dive show. Admission: $9–11. NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, 900 Loggerhead Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 458-8257 or www.ncaquariums.com/fort-fisher.

1/1 New Year's Noon

10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Celebrate the New Year with singing, dancing and crafts complete with confetti, noisemakers, streamers and a juice toast. Admission: $8–9. Children's Museum of Wilmington, 116 Orange Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

1/1 Dolphin Dip

11 a.m. New Year's Day swim event and 5K race. Awards will be given for best in age group, best overall and best costume. Proceeds benefit Ocean Cure. Roland Avenue Beach Access, Surf City. Info: www.dolphindip.net.

1/2–4 Musical Theatre

7:30 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). City Stage presents the classic '60s musical *Hair* which tells the story of a group of idealistic hippies living a bohemian life in New York City and fighting against conscription into the Vietnam War. Admission: $20–29. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/3 New Year's Romp

9 a.m. Kick off your New Year's resolution with a 10k or 5k fitness walk in downtown Wilmington. Admission: $15–40. Proceeds benefit Communities in Schools. Jo Ann Carter Harrelson Center, 20 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com/new-years-romp-5k10k-january-3.

1/5–7 Cinematique Film

7 p.m. *The Theory of Everything*, the incredible story of Jane and Stephen Hawking. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, Mainstage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/6 Book Club Meeting

6:30 p.m. Join a brand new group of book lovers and help shape the character and reading habits of the club's regular book discussions. New Hanover County Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6301 or www.nhclibrary.org.

1/7–9 Painting Workshop

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Three-day workshop with artist Liz Hosier explores painting with oil and cold wax. Experiment with layering color, creating texture, combining different media, using a variety of tools, and expanding mark making. Admission: $300–350. New Hanover County Arboretum Classroom, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 233-7507 or www.wilmingtonart.org.

1/8 Jazz at the CAM

6:30–8:30 p.m. Max Levy and the Hawaiian Shirts perform blues, soul and jazz standards. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

1/8 Elvis Tribute

7 p.m. Local musicians play the King's songs at the ultimate tribute concert. Admission: $5. Ted's Fun on the River, 2 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 231-3379 or tedsfun.com.

1/8–11 Wilmington Fringe Festival

8 p.m. Cape Fear Theatre Arts presents the Wilmington Fringe Festival at City Stage featuring three original full-length plays and ten ten-minute shorts. Also runs 1/16–18 & 1/23–25. City Stage, 21 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 342-0272 or www.citystageco.com.

1/10 Hidden Battleship

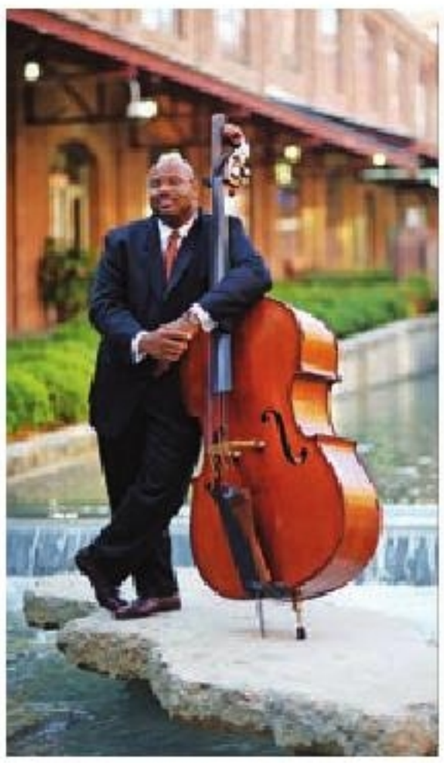
12–4:30 p.m. A four-hour behind-the-scenes tour of the un-restored areas of the Battleship. Admission: $45–50. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

1/10 Civil War Re-enactment

2–3 p.m. A living history portrayal of General F. Hoke at Duplin Road, describing the Wilmington campaign in detail from December 1864 through February 1865, including the struggle at Fort Fisher and life on the home front. Free. Info: (910) 619-4619 or www.cfhi.net.

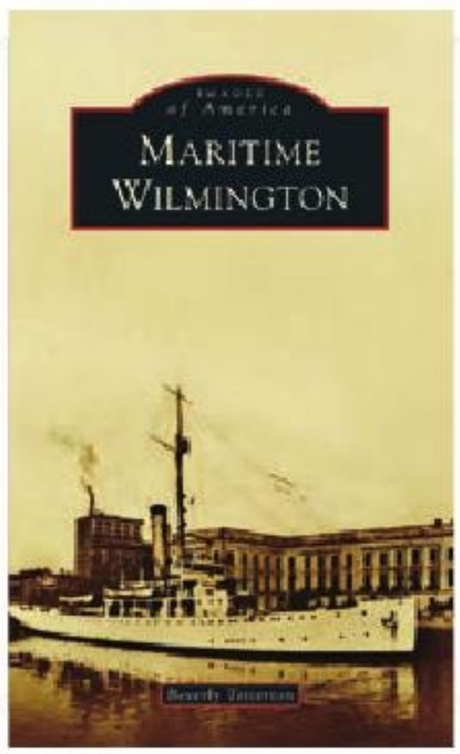
Antique Show & Sale

1/23-25



John Brown Jazz Orchestra

1/23



Book Talk

1/29

Richard Smith and Julie Adams Perform

1/31

1/10 Rip the Runway

6 p.m. Fashion show/fundraiser for the Lillie Ann Heggins Scholarship Fund. Features local DJs, stylists, designers and area retailers. Admission: $20. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.portcityriptherunway.com.

1/11 Jazz Brunch

12–2 p.m. Sunday jazz brunch featuring the Lee Venters Trio. Admission: $15–20. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

1/11 Winter Bridal Expo

12–3 p.m. *Carolina Wedding Guide* presents the finest wedding vendors in the Cape Fear region along with great giveaways from Cape Fear Formal Wear and Clinique. Admission: $5. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 259-8323 or www.carolinaweddingguide.com.

1/11 Historical Society Membership Meeting

3 p.m. Annual membership meeting and membership drive for the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. Dr. Kemille Moore, associate dean at the College of Art and Sciences, will present a lecture on Civil War photography exploring the photographic record of the Civil War, focusing particular attention on battlefield scenes. Refreshments will follow. UNCW Cultural Arts Building, Room 2033, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0496 or www.lcfhs.org.

1/12–18 MLK Jr. Celebration

Weeklong celebration featuring numerous events that commemorate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Highlights include lunch and a press conference, gospel concert, banquet with guest speaker Kenneth Spalding, NAACP breakfast with guest speaker Rev. Ben Chavis, and a Battle of the Bands featuring the Elizabeth City State University Marching Band and North Carolina Central University Marching Band. See website for schedule and locations. Info: (910) 763-4138 or www.mlkjrcelebration-senc10.com.

1/13 Admissions Open House

12:30 p.m. The Friends School of Wilmington hosts an Admission Open House at its Peiffer Campus. Friends School of Wilmington, Peiffer Campus, 350 Pieffer Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-8221 or www.fsow.org.

1/14 Bird Hike

8–9 a.m. Hike along the NC Birding Trail with environmental educators from Airlie Gardens and Jill Peleuses from Wild Bird & Garden. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

1/14 Admissions Open House

10 a.m. The Friends School of Wilmington hosts an Admission Open House at its Pine Grove Campus. Friends School of Wilmington, Pine Grove Campus, 207 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-8221 or www.fsow.org.

1/14 Tasting & Social

6:30–8:30 p.m. Samples of Wild Turkey Rye, Wild Turkey Diamond Anniversary Edition, Russell's Reserve Small Batch Single Barrel, and Untamed Wild Turkey Barrel Aged Chocolate Java Stout plus a chance to meet Wild Turkey Associate Distiller Eddie Russell. Admission: $50. Front Street Brewery, 9 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1935 or frontstreetbrewery.com.

1/14 & 15 Descendants Reunion

Descendant families receive information on the battles at Fort Fisher and the Cape Fear region during the Civil War and provide opportunity to share the stories of their ancestors. Location TBD. Info: (910) 458-5538 or www.friendsoffortfisher.com.

1/15 Admissions Open House

9:15 a.m. – 10:45 p.m. Cape Fear Academy hosts an Admissions Open House for Pre-K–12. Presentation includes short talk from Donald Berger (head of the school) and divisions directors of lower, middle and upper schools. Cape Fear Academy, 3900 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-0287 or www.capefearacademy.org.

1/15 Oyster Roast

5:30 p.m. Join the Wilmington-Cape Fear Home Builders Association for fire roasted oysters, cold beverages and networking oppor-

tunities as you mix and mingle with elected officials. Professional Builders Supply, 111 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 799-2611 or www.wcfhba.com.

1/16 Steep Canyon Rangers Concert

9 p.m. American Bluegrass band performs music from their new album. Admission: $15–20. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096 or ziggysbythesea.com.

1/16–17 StriperFest

6–9 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. (Saturday). Friday night banquet and auction includes fishing gear, vacations, adventure tours, unique art and more. Saturday event include tag and release striped bass fishing tournament, a Cape Fear River Fisheries Science Forum, guided boat tours, a Jot Owens fishing workshop and Community Education Day. Includes art projects, fisheries biology, face painting, casting lessons, and activities that focus the importance of fishery restoration. Banquet Admission: $50/person; $350/table of 8. Proceeds benefit fishery restoration. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5606 or www.capefearriverwatch.org.

1/16–18 Seaglass Salvage Market

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 12–5 p.m. (Sunday). Open on the third weekend of each month, market features upcycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home decor. Seaglass Salvage Market, 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway, Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

1/17 Cold Stroke Classic

9:30 a.m. Annual standup paddle boarding competition hosted by Coastal Urge. Paddlers can opt for the 3.5-mile recreational course or the 7-mile elite course. Throughout the day, exhibitor's expo with free demos will be open to the public; cash prizes awarded to top finishers in each division. Admission: $25/youth; $55/adult; $75/elite. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7112 or www.coldstrokeclassic.com.

1/17 Metropolitan Opera

1–4 p.m. The Metropolitan Opera presents *The Merry Widow* starring Renée Fleming as the femme fatale who beguiles all of Paris in Lehar's gripping operetta. Directed by Susan Stroman. Admission: $20–24. Lumina Theater, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or uncw.edu/olli.

1/17 Courtyards & Cobblestones

4–8 p.m. An inspirational event for brides and grooms designed to showcase historic wedding venues and wedding professionals in a self-guided tour setting. Venture through seven themed reception and ceremony sites in our city's oldest landmarks, browse the area's top wedding products and services, enjoy music from local artists and sample tasty treats. Admission: $18–25. Various venues in Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.courtyardsandcobblestones.com.

1/17 Charity Fashion Show

7:30 p.m. The "I Am Beautiful Fashion Show" features individuals with disabilities showing the world what true beauty and confidence really is. Donations accepted; raffles available. Proceeds benefit the Miracle League of Wilmington. Pine Valley United Methodist Church, 3788 Shipyard Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (937) 408-3370 or www.pvumc.net.

1/17 & 18 Battle of Fort Fisher Anniversary

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Fisher features more than 400 re-enactors, author presentations, evening lantern tours, period music with the Huckleberry Brothers, infantry units discussing camp life, an appearance by the modern US military, displays of muskets and Marine Corps history, and exhibits and activities for kids. Free. Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Boulevard South, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-5538 or www.friendsoffortfisher.com.

1/18 Sunday Night Fever

6 p.m. Thalian Association celebrates the heyday of flamboyant fashion, iconic club music and all-night dancing with its premier tribute to Sunday Night Fever, Disco Redux. Enjoy cocktails, prix fixe dinner, performance, and live auction with jewelry donated by Kingoff's Jewelers. Admission: $60/dinner; $25/show. Proceeds benefit Thalian Association and TACT. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-2251 or thaliana.org.

1/18 Badfish in Concert

9 p.m. Tribute band that continues to channel the energetic, original and uniquely eclectic sound of Sublime, developing a scene and dedicated following most commonly reserved for label-driven, mainstream acts. Admission: $10–15. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096 or ziggysbythesea.com.

1/19 MLK Jr. Memorial Parade

11 a.m. Join Wilmington in honoring the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. with a parade through historic downtown Wilmington. Includes floats, marching bands, horse riders, drill teams, clowns, motor bikes, local businesses, fire departments and federal, state and local elected officials. Arts and crafts, retail and food vendors will be on site. Free. Third Street & Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4138 or www.mlkjrcelebration-senc10.com.

1/21 Cherub in Concert

9 p.m. Cherub is an electro-pop duo that is the dance love child of 80's funk and pop music from the future. Admission: $17–19. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096 or ziggysbythesea.com.

1/22 Piano Concert

7:30 p.m. Pianist Emile Pandolfi performs lush arrangements of time-honored popular standards and Broadway hits, seasoned with a dash of well-known classical favorites and fresh, just-discovered gems. Guest vocalist Dana Russell adds a delicious and impressive bonus to a truly magical recipe. Admission: $10–29. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road NW, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

1/22 & 29 Square Dancing

7 p.m. Square dancing night at the New Hanover County Senior Center; open to all ages and skill levels. Free. New Hanover County Senior Center, 2222 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-1953 or src.nhcgov.com.

1/23 Ping Pong Throw Down

4:30 p.m. Join the Wilmington Table Tennis Club for the biggest ping pong event around. Open to all players; cash prizes awarded to 1st, 2nd & 3rd place winners. The BAC cash bar available; Wilmington food trucks onsite. Admission: $10/players; $5/spectators. Admission includes raffle ticket. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

1/23 Fourth Friday

6–9 p.m. Self-guided tour of the galleries, art spaces and studios in Downtown Wilmington. Free. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

1/23 NC Azalea Pre-Festival Party

7 p.m. This annual event kicks off the NC Azalea Festival season with live music, dancing, heavy hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine and a cash cocktail bar. Location TBD. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org.

1/23 John Brown's Little Big Band

7:30 p.m. Led by acclaimed bassist John Brown, this large professional jazz ensemble is made up of top musicians specializing in traditional compositions and today's cutting-edge arrangements with Big Band hits and a lot of swing. Admission: $20–36. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/23–25 Outer Banks Birding Trip

5 a.m. – 6 p.m. This group trip will focus on waterfowl, shorebirds and land birds of Eastern North Carolina and the Outer Banks. Tour Pocosin Lakes, Lake Mattamuskeet NWR, Alligator River NWR, Pea Island NWR, Oregon Inlet and Bodie Island as well as multiple locations on Hatteras and Ocracoke Island. Lodging and meals are coordinated but not included in cost. Admission: $135 (includes transportation and entrance fees). Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

1/23–25 Antique Show & Sale

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Shop a variety of antiques and vintage items from more than thirty-five vendors including early American and English furniture, primitives, linens, clothing, toys, jewelry, silver, fine china, crystal, rugs, paintings and collectibles of all kinds. This year's event will also include demonstrations by restoration resource providers and a silent auction benefiting Café Fear Communities in Schools. Admission: $7. Proceeds benefit community charities and projects. Coastline Convention Center, 501 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 617-2825 or www.wilmingtonantiqueshow.com.

1/24 DocuTime Film Festival

10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Annual documentary film festival where a dedicated community of documentary-lovers can experience sophisticated and inspiring entertainment from around the world. Admission: $5–7/film; $20–25/all-day pass. UNCW, King Hall Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-4045 or uncw.edu/filmstudies/events/docufest.html.

1/24 Master of Soul

7 p.m. A celebration of Motown artists made famous in the 1960s. The performance is a fully choreographed tribute to male and female groups of the era, backed by a band of musicians who have been performing together for decades. Admission: $15–20. Carolina Civic Center, 315 North Chestnut Street, Lumberton. Info: (910) 738-4339 or www.carolinaciviccenter.com.

1/24 Music on Market

7:30 p.m. Bach Meets Armstrong. Ed Bach returns for a two-part concert featuring pianist Sharon Miller and the Louis Armstrong ensemble in full swing. Free. St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1416 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9693 or www.musiconmarket.org.

1/24 Moon Taxi in Concert

9 p.m. This Nashville rock group performs explorative music from their new album. Admission: $12–15. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096 or ziggysbythesea.com.

1/24 & 25 Home Expo & Remodeling Show

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 12–4 p.m. (Sunday). The area's largest home show featuring the latest trends in home building and remodeling. Enjoy free seminars throughout the day and browse more than 80 exhibits on home improvement, home entertainment, landscaping, remodeling, hurricane protection, custom home building, carpet and flooring, windows, appliances, sunrooms, pools and more. Free. Schwartz Center, Cape Fear Community College, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 799-2611 or www.wcfhba.com/wilmington-homeexpo-remodeling-show.

1/25 Beethoven 15k/5k

9 a.m. 15k & 5k race on paved running trails with an elevated boardwalk and picturesque views of the lake at Brunswick Forest. Post-race party and awards ceremony includes food, drinks, music, prize drawings and a costume contest. Admission: $30–45. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra's youth education programs. Brunswick Forest, 1007 Evangeline Drive, Leland. Info: (910) 791-9262 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

1/25 Bossy on Broadway

3 p.m. Follow Bossy the Cow on the road to Broadway stardom as she deals with competing cows, mad medicine women and the love of her life. Spoiler alert: Bossy wins a Tony! Admission: $10. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/25 NC Symphony Concert

7:30 p.m. A New World Symphony. Falla: *The Three-Cornered Hat*; and Dvorak: *Symphony No. 9* featuring mezzo-soprano Kate Farrar and conductor Carlos Miguel Prieto. Admission: $24–65. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.ncsymphony.org.

1/26 Book Club Meeting

10:30 a.m. Organizational meeting for the Great Conversations 6 book club. This group has been meeting since 1995 to discuss intellectually challenging selections in philosophical anthologies published by the Great Books Foundation. New Hanover County Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or nhclibrary.org.

1/27 Paper Diamond in Concert

9 p.m. The Paper Diamond sound has raw energy and the kind of dramatic anticipation only a seasoned producer can incite. Driving beats

and bass grab on tight while deep, rich tones rumble under layers of spacey synthesizers, sweet melodies, and catchy vocals. Admission: $17–20. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096 or ziggysbythesea.com.

1/29 Book Talk

11 a.m. Join the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society at the Latimer House for the first in a series of monthly book talks on local history by local authors. Beverly Tetterton will discuss her new book, *Maritime Wilmington*, with an optional lunch to follow in the Tea Room at noon. Reservations required. Admission: $5/talk; $10/lunch. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.lcfhs.org.

1/29 National Theatre

2 p.m. *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson's classic story of murder, money and mutiny in a new stage adaptation by Bryony Lavery. Admission: $18–20. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, 620 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/olli.

1/29 Earphunk in Concert

10 p.m. Hailing from New Orleans, Prog-Funk band Earphunk has emerged as one of the Southeast's premier jam acts. Admission: $7–10. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096 or ziggysbythesea.com.

1/29–2/1 East Coast Shag Classic

Annual beach music and shag festival held at Wrightsville Beach. Enjoy concerts by the Band of Oz, the Embers, the Entertainers, the Craig Woolard Band and Jim Quick and the Coastline Band as well as shag and line dancing lessons, the ECSC Shag Competition, a silent auction, the Big Kahuna Beach Party, hors d'oeuvres with DJ Warren and Ken Jones and a meet & greet fan fair. Proceeds benefit Women of Hope. See website for details. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 297-7688 or www.eastcoastshagclassic.com.

1/30–2/1 Wine & Chocolate Festival

7–10 p.m. (Friday); 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 12–4 p.m. (Sunday). Annual festival features a Friday night Grand Tasting with heavy hors d'oeuvres, cash beer and cigar bar, live entertainment by The Schoolboys and Nutt Street comedians, artisan exhibits and a Marketplace preview. Saturday & Sunday features the Marketplace, a tasting tour of the best Carolina wineries, sweet sensations from the region's signature chocolatiers, plus demos, raffles and entertainment on the riverfront. Admission: $45/Grand Tasting; $10–15/Marketplace. Coastline Conference & Event Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 742-0120 or wilmingtonwineandchocolatefestival.com.

1/31 Live Music

1 p.m. Acclaimed guitar and cello duo Richard Smith and Julie Adams perform all new music in celebration of their new CD. Admission: $15. Red Barn Studio Theatre, 1122 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: redbarnstudiotheatre.com.

1/31 Metropolitan Opera

1–4:45 p.m. *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, featuring luminous tenor Vittorio Grigolo as the tortured soul and unwitting adventurer in Offenbach's theatrical tour de force. Admission: $20–24. Lumina Theater, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/olli.

1/31 Sip, Swap & Shop

6 p.m. Lump to Laughter's annual Sip, Swap and Shop features a swap party, drinks and hors d'oeuvres, raffles, silent and live auctions, vendor booths, a 50/50 raffle, swag bags and more. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit Lump to Laughter. The Terraces at Sir Tyler, 1826 Sir Tyler Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 617-4455 or www.lumptolaughter.org.

1/31 NHRMC Founders' Gala

7 p.m. Join the NHRMC Foundation for a night of food, fun and dancing at their annual black tie fundraising gala. This year's theme, "Paris, City of Lights" includes live music from Jessie's Girls, an open bar and an array of tapas. Presented by Knox Clinic Pediatrics. Admission: $375. Proceeds will fund a new Angel Eye's Webcam System for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Air Wilmington Hangar, 1817 Aviation Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-5002 or www.nhrmc.org/Gala.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films

7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Thursday SOAR Kids' Club

4:30–5:30 p.m. (starting January 15) Kids' club with a focus on teaching virtues such as kindness, patience, integrity, character, strength and gratitude. The club also aims to introduce kids to altruism by volunteering for different events within the community such as the beach sweep, feeding the homeless, participating in angel tree and singing to elderly residents. For children grades 2–5. Chick-fil-a, Mayfaire Town Center, 6891 Swan Mill Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 352-7469 or kidsofvirtue.wix.com/kidsofvirtue.

Tuesday Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Thursday Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday River Club

6:30 p.m. Enjoy drinks on the dock and live music on the river by local musicians. Come and go as you please. Boat is fully enclosed and heated. Free. Wilmington Water Tours, 212 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 338-3134 or www.wilmingtonwatertours.net.

Friday & Saturday Dinner Theatre

7 p.m. *Love Happens*. A romantic comedy by Richard Orlaff that follows a year in the lives of two couples, one beginning and one approaching their 50th anniversary. Runs January 9 through February 14. Admission: $24–42. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Salt MAGAZINE

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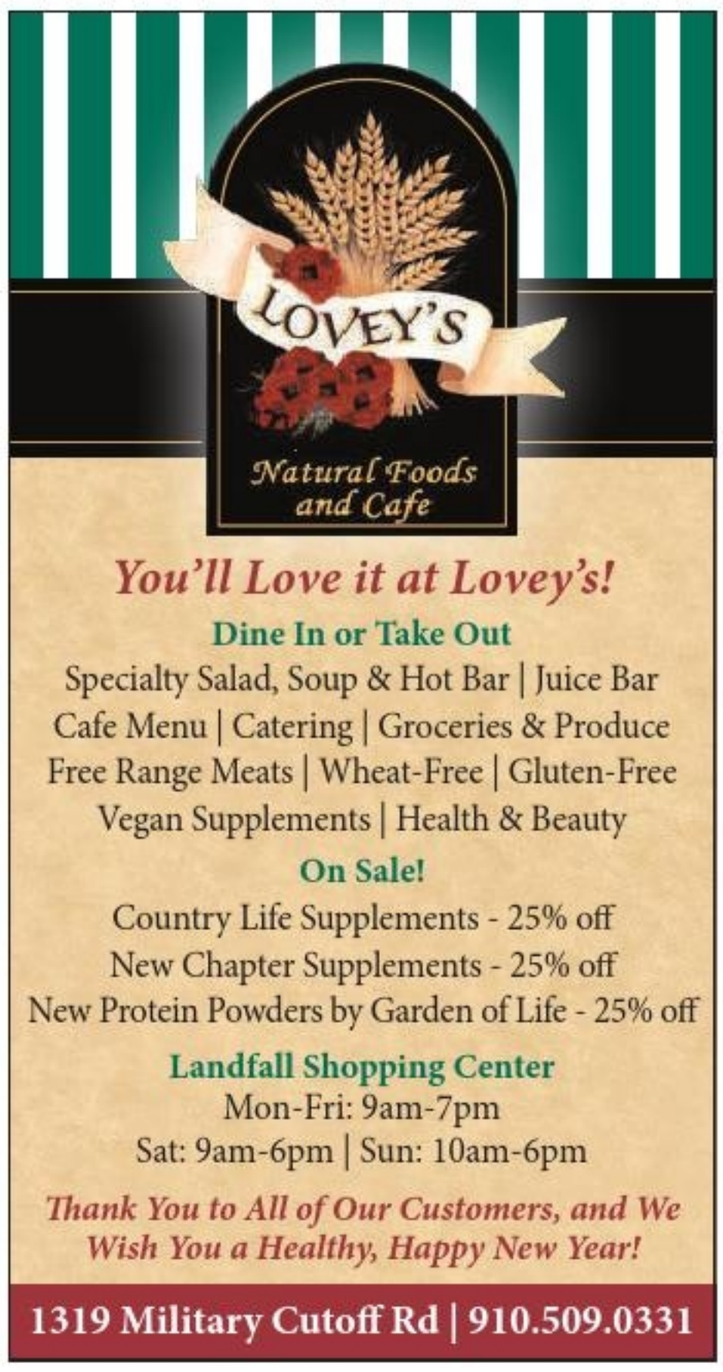
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The Marketplace
Saturday 11 a.m. – 6 pm
Sunday noon – 4 pm
Live Music, Café,
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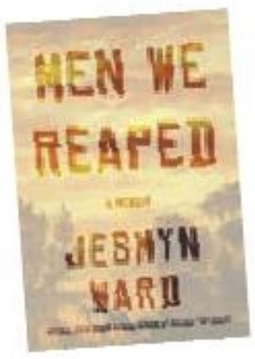
Demos & Kid's Korner

N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding

Ring out the old, ring in the new. Ring happy bells, across the snow: The year is going, let him go; ring out the false, ring in the true. – Alfred Lord Tennyson



LITERARY EVENTS

2014–2015 Visiting Writers Series, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory.

January 19 (Monday, 7 p.m.). Jesmyn Ward. Her second novel received the 2011 National Book Award for Fiction. Her most recent book, *Men We Reaped*, is a memoir.

February 12 (Thursday, 7 p.m.). Katherine Howe. This *New York Times* best-selling author hosted the National Geographic series, *Salem: Unmasking the Devil*. She teaches at Cornell.

February 26 (Thursday, 7 p.m.) Paul Muldoon. A Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and professor at Princeton University, he is poetry editor of *The New Yorker*.

March 5 (Thursday, 7 p.m.) Nadia Bolz-Weber. The founding Lutheran pastor of House for all Sinners and Saints, she has published two "God-drenched and liberating books."

April 18 (Saturday, 7 p.m.) Joyce Hostetter writes historical fiction books for children. Her best known, *Blue*, received the International Reading Association Children's Book Award. Info: visitingwriters.lr.edu

Other noteable events

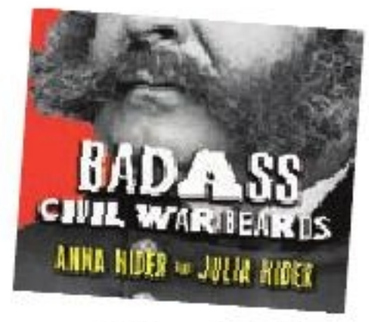
January 14 (Wednesday, 5 p.m.). Deborah Johnson, *The Secret of Magic*. Combining history with fiction, this extraordinary novel navigates the muddy waters of prejudice during the 1946 murder investigation of a black war hero. The County Bookshop, Southern Pines. Info: thecountrybookshop.biz

January 26 (Monday, 7 p.m.). Tim Johnston will read from *Descent*, a literary crime novel "with a restrained tone and a constant aching dread." Scuppernong Books, Greensboro. Info: scuppernongbooks.com

February 28 (Saturday, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.). Book 'Em North Carolina Writers Conference and Book Fair, Robeson Community College, Lumberton. Headliners Terry Irving and Terri Reid join more than seventy other literary presenters. Browse books focused on seventeen different genres. All purchases benefit literacy. Info: bookemnc.org

CONGRATULATIONS

Long, hard slog today writing the Great American Tweet. – Greg Tamblyn



John F. Blair Publishers of Winston-Salem recently celebrated sixty years of selling books about the South. *Badass Civil War Beards*, co-written by Anna Marie Hider and Julia Ann Hider, tops their new list. This side-splitter features "over 100 of the Civil War's most stupidly awesome (and awesomely stupid) examples of facial hair" plus hirsute poems, puns and historical tidbits. Info: blairpub.com

Rebecca Petruck's children's book, *Steering Toward Normal*, is an American Booksellers Association New Voices selection. Petruck, who now lives in North Carolina, holds an MFA from UNC Wilmington.

WRITING LESSON

Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid courted by incapacity. – William Blake

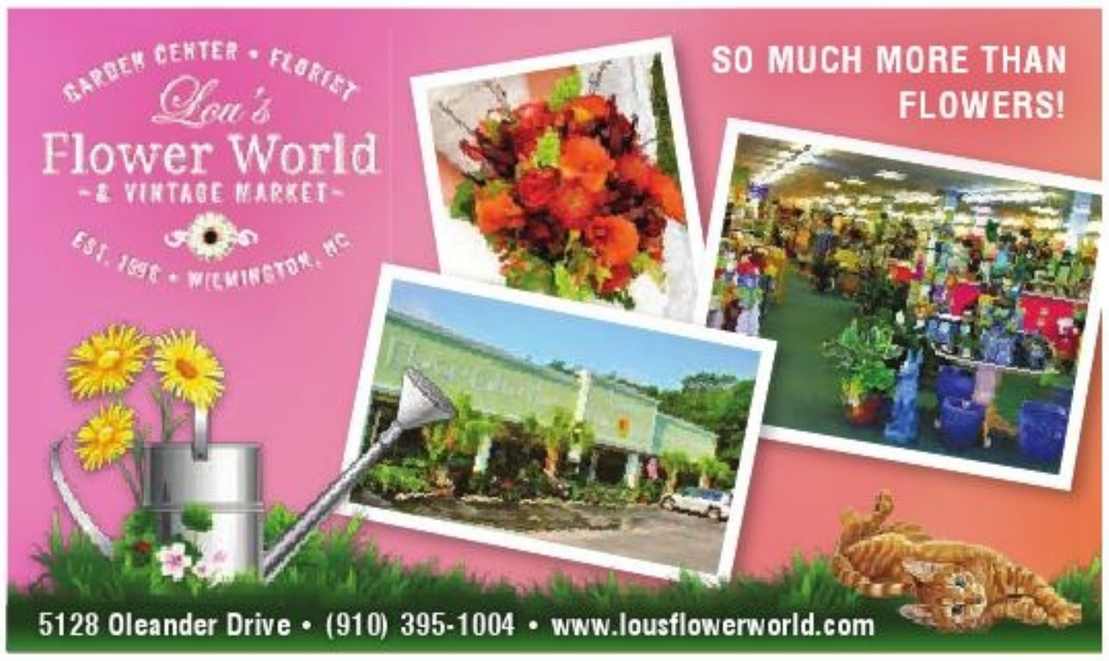
On November 1, 2014, during a celebration of the 100th anniversary of Randall Jarrell's birth held at UNCG, seven speakers shared memories of the brilliant poet, astute critic and brave World War II soldier. Heather Ross Miller, Sylvia Wilkinson and Emily Herring Wilson entertained guests by relating events of 1961, the first year Jarrell taught poetry.

Jarrell called the campus Sleeping Beauty and his students, girls. He boosted their confidence by writing their poems on a blackboard and reading them aloud. Miller described him as "warm and kind." Wilkinson spoke of his gallant manners, always thanking them for attending class. Wilson said he was "a cup of joy." Challenging his students to think broadly, he suggested they try writing with pens, chalk, crayons, even sticks to form words in dirt. According to Miller, his objective was to convince students they could change themselves. In addition to writing classes, he taught poetry, once spending an entire semester on *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, by T. S. Eliot.

How successful were his unique methods? Miller, who lives in Stanley County, has published over twenty books, including *Celestial Navigator: Writing Poems with Randall Jarrell* (2014). Wilkinson has published over twenty-six, and Wilson, who lives in Winston-Salem and is admired as a lecturer and activist, has also penned several poetry and nonfiction books. These three remarkable "girls," like their master teacher, are a living legacy to his talents as a poet, teacher and person.

Happy New Year! Do keep me updated on writer happenings.
sanredd@earthlink.net

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in a Quaker Community.*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Red Dress Project
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Wilmington Convention Center
To benefit NHRMC Cardiac Services providing heart education, screenings and treatment for women.
To register, visit www.nhrmcfoundation.org or call 910.815.5002.

Port City People

12th Annual Willie Stargell Foundation Auction and Dinner

The Country Club of Landfall
Saturday, November 8, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Lyndie Greenwood, Bethany Levy

Ashley Miller, Jo Anne Fox, Dana Fisher

Eric & Cindy Pierson

Jerome Bettis, Michelle Clark

Genie Cannon, Deloris Rhodes

Tonye Gray and Charmanie Gray

Melissa & Andrew Fallis

Jason & Katie Swain

Bunnie & Kevin Bachman

Jennifer & Jonathan Weiss

Port City People

Diamonds & Champagne Hope Ball

Coastline Convention Center
Saturday, November 22, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

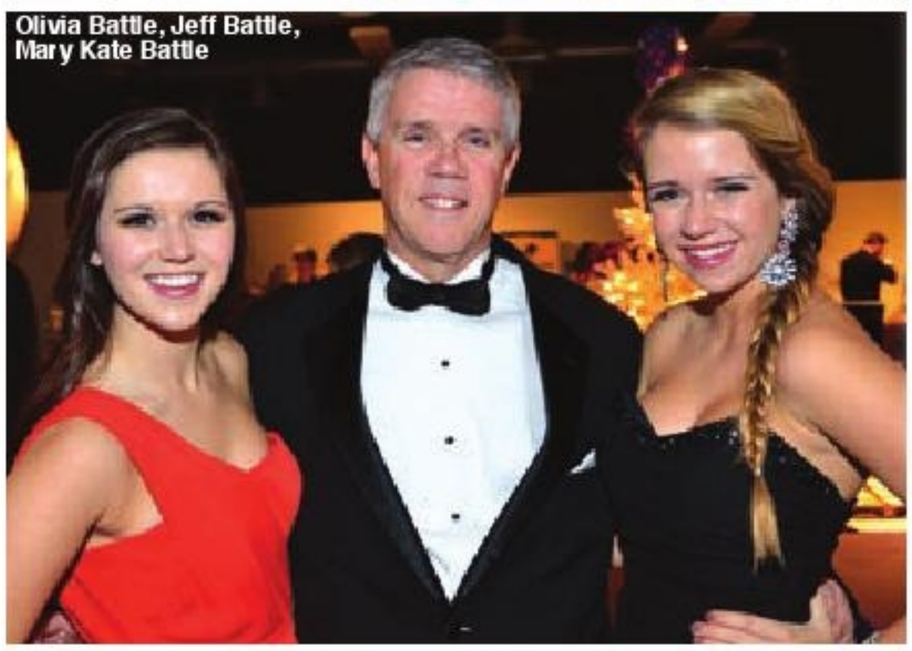
Daniel Seamans, Victoria Bollinger

Hillary Laster

Willa Hughey, Kenny Barnes

Chris Carlton, Helen Holt

Bryan & Brooke Baker


Olivia Battle, Jeff Battle, Mary Kate Battle

Joe & Denise Szaloky
Angie & Joe Jackson

Emily Holt, Paxton Webster

Fern & Dr. Ron Bugg

Dayton & Pamela Kirk, Mark Gregory

Eric Burgos, Jennifer Glover

Port City People

The 12 Tastes of Christmas

Benefitting the Cape Fear Literacy Council
Brooklyn Arts Center
Saturday, November 1, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Jared Sales and Chris Andrews of Front Street Brewery

Hunter & Hannah Moon, Meghan Kelly, Nathan Gavin

Timmy & Lisa Sherrill

Scott Wagner, Rose Hunt

Chris & Liz Day, Leslie Rasmussen, Jeff Hamilton

Sheryl Mays, Peter Ordonez

Mindy & John Bays

Matt & Julie Bobo, Daniel & Jenifer Meyer

Anne Pakulniewicz, Cinnamon Wright Karen White, Jenna Dahlgren

Emily & Mile Barlas

John & Michelle Savard

Port City People

journey4josh Launch Party
Friday, December 5, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Chief Ralph Evangelous, George Perkins, Travis Williams, Patty Proutey, Matt Fox, Mitch Cunningham

Susan Habas, Randy Shackelford, Helena Beldizar, Abigail Schlichtmann

Patty Proutey, Zymir Batts

Cindy Ramsey, Melissa Ausey

Christian Lonnecker, Tosh Brown

Roger Davis, Angel McCall

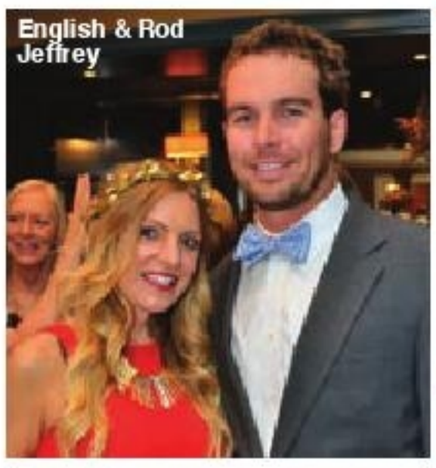
Zymir, Amir and Xavier Batts

Port City People

9th Annual Wilmington Fur Ball
Country Club of Landfall
Saturday, December 6, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Pat Kusek, David & Joyce Fielder

Eric Deguerra, Josh & Karen Greenland


English & Rod Jeffrey

Taylor Yakowenko & Braxton Wade

Leslie Smith, Jody Mauldin Amy Spicuzza

Jonathan & Mary Vance Calhoun

Tami & Bradley Erbes

Stephanie & Jim Mayew

Megan Whitley, Carly Nunalee, Caitlyn Carroll

John & Pam Valente Jaqueline & David Parker

January's Stars

Time for a cosmic re-set, sugar

By Astrid Stellanova

Happy New Year, Star Children! Ruled by Saturn, our Capricorn dearies are truly destiny's hard-working, hard-playing children. Elvis, Betty White, Kate Middleton Windsor, Jim Carrey, First Lady Michelle Obama – all born under the sign of Capricorn. Who wouldn't want to share the playground with Cappies?

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
The sun transits your sign from January 15 until February 14. Due to Mercury still being in your sign this month, your level of energy continues surging like you just sucked down two Red Bulls. I'm here to tell you that a package arrives – in a form I lack the powers to fully describe, but let's just call it unexpected. Tear off the wrapper and just know that it is the first of several unexpected events still to come. Deep breaths. Go ahead and blow the candles, but don't blow a wad this month when the celebrations begin. And they will begin, Sugar.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
If you followed through and started that creative venture last month, this is when you get a better understanding of what it will require. Trust close friends – you've got even more of them than hopes and wishes. They can see you more clearly than you know. And listen to Astrid: You get seduced very easily. You have a trusting nature, like my Aquarian cousin Luther. It should take more than a can of pork and beans to lure you to the picnic, you know what I mean? By sign you have so much mental ability, but Honey, you are either polite or unpredictable. Hold out for ham.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
There is something fishy going on in your personal life; speak up and don't let anybody treat you like a durned fool. When you get worked up, you can cuss the paint off a fire hydrant, so keep your cool. Mars is in your money sector next month. You will do fine with finances – and possibly even more than fine. You may be tempted to check something off your bucket list that involves Little Debbie products; why not, Honey? Life can be sweet.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Venus may be in retrograde, but that don't stop you from finding love if that is what you want. Especially a retread love, which is, IMHO, about as good a bargain as a retread tire. Don't have much wear on it. But money will be in your wallet and a song in your heart. It's a good year for you if you don't mind having to work for it. Outside of a second job, try zipping up the wallet and resisting at least every other one of those irresistible things you find. An old power struggle rears up again; it is family-related, so a lot to handle. You're a softer touch than anybody knows – but you know!

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
You may win a trip; maybe to some prize destination like Hershey, Pennsylvania. A Taurus has a special weakness for chocolate, and this could be a dream come true, Sweet Thing. With Saturn in your relationship sector, you might just find the one you would want to come along for a cocoa dip in the chocolate Jacuzzi. You will feel compelled to find love this year. If you are already in a relationship, it means you are going to be able to meet your full love potential. If you aren't, hang onto your Hanes, Baby, because it is going to be hard to keep them on.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Last month, you thought your true love had a cheating heart. Now, you have gotten a fixation on the neighbor. It's hard to get your traction this month, but blame it all on Jupiter. Jupiter has gotten you all shook up, Baby. Some of my psychic friends call it a curious situation, but that is like calling an eclipse a little shade. Honey, you have a lot more control over things than you believe. Keep your head down, and be sure you don't spend too much time on trivial crap that really doesn't matter. It's all in your hands, truly, and if you keep them occupied, you will not get them caught creeping around in the wrong place.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
The last cosmic cycle gave you a gigantic wedgie. Now, you get some astral relief. Thank your lucky Mars for coming to the rescue, Baby. And don't forget to thank Pluto, who is going to transform your relationships all through 2015. Your indecisiveness has not helped one bit; finally you get some clarity but don't second-guess your choices. Roll with it, and trust the universe is on your side. You have worked hard; try a little time on the playground.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Your redneck charm could woo and win a duchess – at least the Duchess of York – when Mars is in your relationship sector. But put work ahead of love in the first quarter of 2015. You can work on your, um, courtly manners later. If you roll up your sleeves, you could have some very unexpected payoffs. Sweet Thing, love don't pay the bills and you have champagne tastes. If you pay attention to finances, you will have good mojo with money and career options. Astrid don't lie about money – seldom ever.

Virgo (August 23––September 22)
Taking advantage of a good deal too late is like restocking floor fans in the middle of a hurricane. So keep up with the stars, Child, and don't let opportunities blow right on by you. This is a year to pay attention to your work life. Mercury will mess with you but be determined to work through your frustrations. Bait your hook – remember you have to show up first if you want to fish. If you do, there will be plenty of bites and you will snag a big fish on your hook; but give it a lot of play, loose the line, and you will reel it in. And don't be afraid to go fishing with an old pal – or former employer.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
You like to explain yourself. A lot. Take it from Astrid. Don't complain, and don't explain, just like I used to say in the hair salon. Mars has big power over you by late winter; it will make you urgently wish to seek out new relationships and, as a result, you are a lot more reckless than normal. Move carefully, because your sign especially doesn't like having to back up when you make a wrong turn, Honey. It is also difficult for you to focus on your work this month, so realize it is OK to gear down and regroup. You're just a little tired, Baby. Maybe it's from all that explaining; give it a rest.

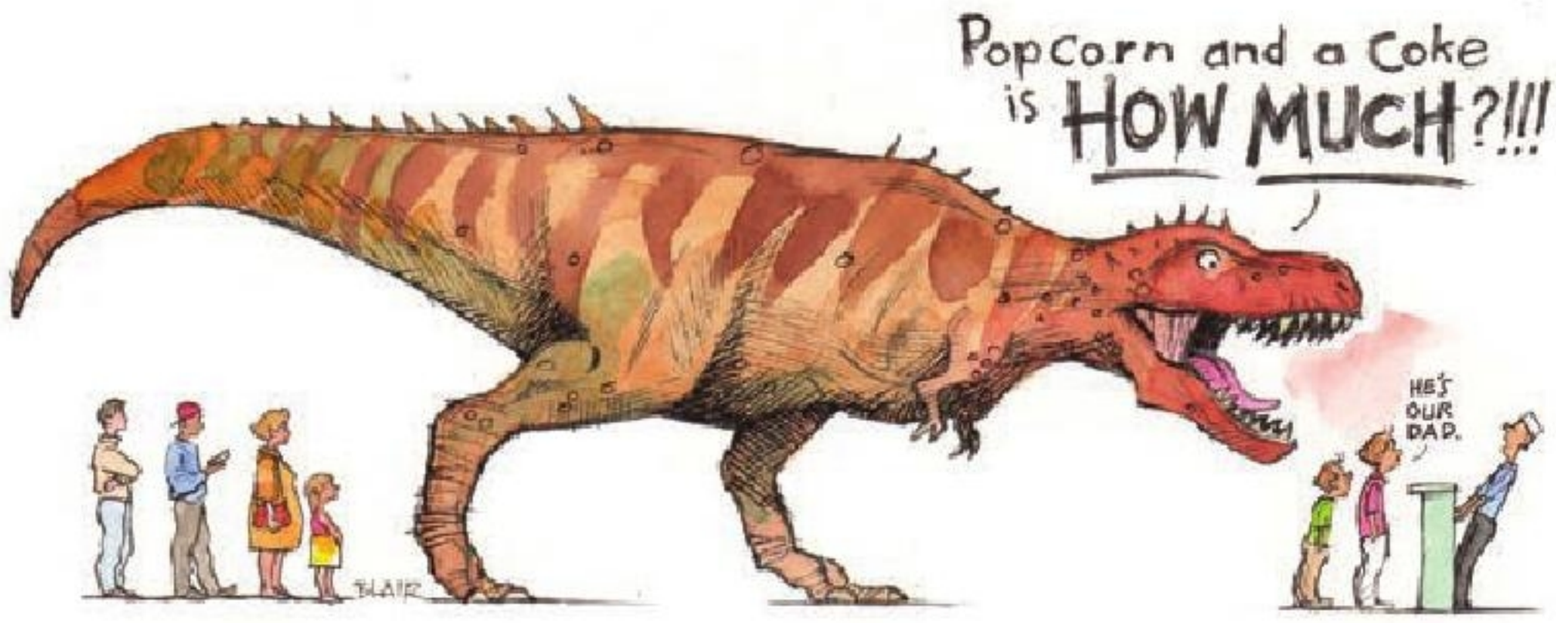
Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
In the middle of January, Mars enters your love sector. You are going to enjoy flirting and fooling around, which surprises exactly nobody as you are a natural born flirt. You, my friend, are so secretive but at the same time so dad-blame transparent that anybody watching can probably figure you out. My Beau bought another Jon boat he didn't need but tried to claim it just showed up in the driveway. Mercury is in retrograde, so you may find yourself just as frustrated as you make others.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Your fickle heart gets you in a pickle this year. You don't exactly have the right wiring to commit; but you sure do know how to get yourself into some head-butting, nail-biting drama whenever you go after something or someone. Trouble is, you want something or someone else the next week. It's hard for you to find your true North. Astrid gets it; so my advice to you is come to terms with yourself and let go of some old business you can't really resolve. Forgive and forget; your compass will work again, Sugar.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Have Some Popcorn

And bring back Old Fashioned Night



By Clyde Edgerton

I haven't been to the movies in a long time.

So I take two of my kids.

My wife, who goes with them to a movie right often, said as I left the house, "Buy them a small popcorn."

The kids get into the cinema lobby and order their tickets before I get in the door. I walk over to the cash register behind which stands the teenager selling tickets and goodies. He sees me standing behind my kids and makes the connection. "Would you like a ticket, too?" he says.

"No thanks," I say. "I'm going to stay in the lobby and read." (I'm working on deadline and have to finish reading a book I'm supposed to review, and the movie is about a big white balloon with a head.)

I'm not paying much attention to the kids. I figure they'll each want a soft drink and popcorn. I remember about the popcorn and say, "Two small popcorns," thinking my wife meant one each. (But remember? — she'd said, "Buy them a small popcorn.")

I look at the cash register — at the little window that says what you owe. There is a number there and I think to myself: Oh — the people in front of us just bought an automobile.

I say, "What do I owe you?" and the teenager says the amount that I just looked at. The reason I won't say the number is because, under the circumstances, it is, in my view, obscene.

People! What the hell?

My wife of course had meant ONE SMALL BAG TOTAL for the two kids. She knew.

The kids, with no prompting from me, had already ordered an empty cup — for water. *They* knew. No wonder they seemed surprised and elated at a bag of popcorn each. I then remembered them each pocketing one piece of old Halloween candy on the way out of the house. My wife has trained them to help keep us solvent. But still, there is that price of an automobile I just looked at — OK, granted, a medium-sized auto.

You, gentle reader, may go to the movies fairly often. As I mentioned at the outset, I don't. Now . . . I'm now thinking that we American citizens are like the proverbial frog placed in the pot of cool water on the hot stove. The price of movie tickets and food in a movie theater has been going up like heated water in a pot and *we, like the frog, have not noticed* . . . and may I suggest? We are now DEAD.

In my house we are going to re-institute something we used to do, but haven't in a while: "Old Fashioned Night." We get a fire going in the fireplace, turn off electric switches, light candles, warm some food over the fireplace, eat, and then play a board game or card came and read or tell stories. Here's my next Old Fashioned Night story:

The owners of Carmike Cinemas sit atop very large piles of money on islands in the South Pacific. Every few seconds, crews empty onto each pile six or eight wheelbarrows of new money while one or two wheelbarrows of money are taken from the pile and loaded onto a money boat that every day heads to Hollywood with forty million bucks for a young movie star now paying installments on that future first facelift. The people operating the wheelbarrows are people with wrinkles and bags under their eyes. They are called middle class and poor.

Movies become worse and worse, more and more violent, popcorn becomes more and more expensive, and pretty soon movies are affordable to only actors, movie theater owners, dermatologists, and CEOs of corporations that now have person-status and cast way more political power than a person-citizen could ever dream of casting. The wheelbarrow operators and their families stay home and play "Old Fashioned Night." One night a family of these people pop some popcorn and get an idea. They bag it, organize with other wheelbarrow operators and then sell their popcorn in movie theater parking lots. They make so much money they can start going to movies again and no longer must bother with making their own entertainment. Through brilliant entrepreneurship they are now living the American Dream!

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

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